

The Philosopher Poet: Petrarch's Conception of Virtue

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Declaration

I hereby declare

(a) that I have composed this thesis

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Abstract

Francesco Petrarca ('Petrarch') is often referred to as the 'first Renaissance man', a pioneer of humanism and a poet whose influence was both powerful and enduring. Although the validity of the description has been the subject of intensive debate, the importance which has been attached to his humanistic interests and vernacular poetry continues to shape our understanding of his thought, and has significantly affected the way in which his engagement with moral philosophy is perceived. Comparatively little scholarly effort has been made to analyse Petrarch's moral philosophy, but where his ethical concerns have been addressed, his status as a humanist and poet has led to many of his Latin works being viewed as eclectic and frequently contradictory texts. Concerned more with literary imitation than with philosophical consistency, Petrarch is often held to have equivocated between Stoic and Peripatetic positions recovered principally from Cicero, and a fideistic theology derived from St. Augustine, and to have been influenced by a preoccupation with stylistic interests.

In this thesis, I offer a reinterpretation of Petrarch's moral philosophy. Although Petrarch's influence on humanistic practice and vernacular poetry is considerable, his reputation as a poet by no means encapsulates either his own view of himself, or the manner in which his contemporaries perceived him. Petrarch not only saw himself as a 'moral philosopher and poet', but also viewed the practice of eloquence as being indistinguishable from the moral philosopher's task. This corresponds to the distribution of Petrarch's works in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, and also to the opinions expressed by contemporary friends and admirers.

Far from being an inconsistent moral aphorist, I show that Petrarch elaborated a coherent system of moral philosophy and I offer a re-evaluation of Petrarch's debt to classical, patristic and medieval thought. Looking first at the *Secretum*, I argue that, rather than having been a contradictory author motivated primarily by a desire to emulate classical works, Petrarch constructed a consistent notion of virtue based on the early writings of St. Augustine, whose debt to classical literature he knew intimately. I then turn to examine the application of this abstract notion of virtue to a more practical philosophy of living. In chapters dealing with *otium*, solitude and friendship, Petrarch's treatment of these concepts is shown not merely to have been informed by his assimilation of St. Augustine's theology,

but also to have interacted closely with key texts in the history of medieval monasticism. In a final chapter dealing with the relationship between moral philosophy and eloquence, I attempt to demonstrate that, far from having been an unreconstructed 'Ciceronian', Petrarch's rhetorical theory was derived from a more medieval and Christian understanding of the role of oratory, and I offer a new reading of his provocative attacks on the rhetorical claims of contemporary Aristotelians.

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Introduction

Petrarch: poet, humanist, moral philosopher?

I had a well-balanced rather than a keen intellect, fit for all kinds of good and wholesome study, but especially inclined to moral philosophy and poetry. Yet in the course of time I abandoned the latter, when I found delight in sacred letters, in which I found the hidden sweetness I once despised; for I limit poetry to embellishment only. I have dwelt single-mindedly on learning about antiquity, among other things because this age has always displeased me, so that, unless love for my dear ones pulled me the other way, I always wished to have been born in any other age whatever, and to forget this one, seeming always to graft myself in my mind onto other ages.¹

Since his works first became the subject of modern critical scholarship, Petrarch has often been thought of as the ‘first modern man’, as Renan put it.² As a pioneer of humanism, he has been viewed as having helped to usher in a revival of classical learning, while as a poet whose influence was both powerful and enduring he has been presented as having been concerned with the development of the concept of the individual and with the subjective exploration of the psyche.³ Although he openly confessed his aptitude for poetry and his deep affection for Antiquity in the *Posteritati*, however, Petrarch also consciously portrayed

¹ *Posteritati* (*Sen.* XVIII, 1): ‘Ingenio fui equo potius quam acuto, ad omne bonum et salubre studium apto, sed ad moralem precipue philosophiam et ad poeticam prono; quam ipse processu temporis neglexi, sacris literis delectatus, in quibus sensi dulcedinem abditam, quam aliquando contempseram, poeticis literis non nisi ad ornatum reservatis. Incubui unice, inter multa, ad notitiam vetustatis, quoniam michi semper etas ista displicuit; ut, nisi me amor carorum in diversum traheret, qualibet etate natus esse semper optaverim, et hanc oblivisci, nisus animo me aliis semper inserere.’ in *Prose*, ed. G. Martellotti, P. G. Ricci, E. Carrara, E. Bianchi, (Milan and Naples, 1955), 6. Translation in *Letters of Old Age: Rerum Senilium Libri I-XVIII*, trans. A. S. Bernardo, S. Levin and R. A. Bernardo, 2 vols., (Baltimore and London, 1992), 2:673-4. On the *Posteritati*, see, for example, E. Carrara, *Studi petrarcheschi* (Turin, 1959), 273-342; E. H. Wilkins, ‘On the Evolution of Petrarch’s *Letter to Posterity*,’ *Speculum* 39 (1964): 304-8.

² E. Renan, *Averroès et l’Averroïsme*, 3rd ed., (Paris, 1866), 328.

³ The most useful biographical studies of Petrarch are N. Mann, *Petrarch* (Oxford, 1984) and E. H. Wilkins, *Life of Petrarch* (Chicago, 1961). Also invaluable are U. Bosco, *Petrarca*, 2nd ed. (Bari, 1961) and K. Foster, *Petrarch. Poet and Humanist* (Edinburgh, 1984).

himself as having had a facility for moral philosophy, and it is striking that historical emphasis on his 'modernity' has significantly affected the manner in which his engagement with ethical questions has been perceived.

Building on the fascination for poetic immortality which had been fostered by earlier works such as Muratori's *Osservazioni* (1711), De Sade's *Mémoires pour la vie de François Pétrarque* (1764-7) and Baldelli's *Del Petrarca e delle sue opere* (1797), the nineteenth century ushered in a dramatic flurry of scholarly interest in Petrarch. Although accompanied by a burgeoning concern for philological precision, this increased attention was driven more by contemporary aesthetic preoccupations than by more objective academic curiosity. As Joseph Fucilla has observed, it was the impulse of Romanticism – which placed such 'stress on biographical criticism and on imagination, feeling and sensibility as prime poetic perquisites' – that conspired to 'bring Petrarch into new focus.'⁴ These underlying sensibilities motivated the production of critical editions that were to be of lasting importance – such as the versions of the *Canzoniere* by Marsand (1819-20) and Carducci (1876; 1899²), the *Africa* by Pingaud (1872) and Corradini (1874), the *Familiars* by Fracassetti (1859-63), and the minor Latin poems by Rossetti (1829-34)⁵ – but their influence conspired to generate a Romantic image of Petrarch as a poet with whom Alessandro Manzoni and Giacomo Leopardi could readily identify themselves and freely imitate.⁶ Demonstrating little concern for the development of a structured moral philosophy, Petrarch was presented as a pioneer of humanism preoccupied with the exploration of his own, often confused emotions and the elaboration of a powerful individualism in delicate verse. For Ugo Foscolo, for example, Petrarch's outlook was entirely poetic. In his *Saggi sul Petrarca* (1820-23), Foscolo saw Petrarch as having drawn on the heritage of the classical past in his verse to explore an irreconcilable tension between nature and *fortuna*, between the contrasting demands of his warring passions, and between his love of Laura and his love of virtue.⁷ Similarly, for Francesco De Sanctis, writing later in the nineteenth century, Petrarch

⁴ J. G. Fucilla, 'The Present Status of Petrarchan Studies,' in A. Scaglione, ed., *Francis Petrarch, Six Centuries Later. A Symposium* (Chapel Hill and Chicago, 1975), 25-55, here 29.

⁵ For an excellent treatment of the production of critical editions of Petrarch's vernacular and Latin works, see C. Naselli, *Il Petrarca nell'Ottocento*, (Naples, 1923), 37-98.

⁶ The bibliography on the debt owed by Manzoni and Leopardi to Petrarch is enormous, but for an introduction, see Naselli, *Il Petrarca nell'Ottocento*, 407-66; Fucilla, 'The Present Status of Petrarchan Studies,' 29-30. On Leopardi in particular, see, for example, E. Bonora, 'Leopardi e Petrarca', in *Leopardi e la letteratura italiana dal Duecento al Seicento* (Florence, 1978), 91-150 ; E. Pasquini, 'Leopardi e i poeti antichi italiani,' in *Leopardi e l'Ottocento*, (Florence, 1970), 507-40; L. Trenti, 'Riflessioni leopardiane su Petrarca' in S. Gentili and L. Trenti, eds., *Il Petrarchismo nel Settecento e nell'Ottocento* (Rome, 2006), 137-68.

⁷ The most invaluable study of Foscolo remains D. Bianchi, 'Studi del Foscolo sul Petrarca,' in *Studi sul Foscolo, a cura dell'Università di Pavia nel primo centenario della morte del poeta* (Turin, 1927),

was both a literary figure who should be regarded as the founder of Italian humanism, and a poet concerned more with imagination and the art of representation than with the analysis of things and concepts.⁸ In his *Saggio critico sul Petrarca* (1869), De Sanctis explained that Petrarch, valuing emotions, sensibilities, literary study and the ideal of classical beauty highly, employed his intellect not as a systematic analytical tool, but as an auxiliary to his other faculties.⁹ By the same token, influential studies of the humanists' relationship with Antiquity – such as those by Voigt (1859) and Körting (1878, 1884) – brought Petrarch's classical learning into sharper focus, but nevertheless added credence to his having been occupied more with classical imitation and self-exploration than with serious questions of moral philosophy.¹⁰

Despite the waning of the Romantic sentiments which had dominated much nineteenth-century scholarship, the legacy of ottocento thought proved enduring and during the early twentieth century Petrarch continued to be portrayed as a poet who was dedicated to self-analysis and literary imitation, but immune to the concerted study of moral philosophy. Although the details of his struggles with *gloria*, *fama* and *amor* were brought into increasingly sharp focus, Petrarch remained the poet of *dissidio*. Those who enriched the study of his humanism no less than any others were prone to see in his passion for Antiquity the essence of his un-philosophical modernity. In the second edition of his *Pétrarque et l'Humanisme* (1907), Pierre de Nolhac staunchly defended Petrarch's claim to have been the 'first modern man' by contending that '[p]eu importe que les idées en lui ne soient pas originales, puisque ses aspirations le sont à un degré si rare; c'est un poète, non un philosophe, que va aider sur le monde et l'agir à se transformer.'¹¹ From the beginning of his literary life, the beauty of the classics enchanted him and carried him on his voyage of poetic imagination, drawing him away from the disciplines which were the foundation of so much contemporary intellectual endeavour – jurisprudence, theology and scholastic philosophy.¹² Writing nineteen years later and with a broader historical focus in mind, Edward Tatham

451-524. For a useful discussion of Foscolo's scholarship and poetry, see also Naselli, *Il Petrarca nell'Ottocento*, 189-99, 389-406.

⁸ F. De Sanctis, *Storia della letteratura italiana*, ed. N. Gallo, introd. G. Ficara, (Turin, 1996), 245-6; Naselli, *Il Petrarca nell'Ottocento*, 230.

⁹ For De Sanctis' understanding of Petrarch, see, for example, F. Calitti, '«Il giornale dell'amore»: De Santis legge Petrarca,' in Gentili and Trenti, eds., *Il Petrarchismo nel Settecento e nell'Ottocento*, 215-36; V. Titone, 'Il Petrarca e la critica del De Sanctis,' *Critica vecchia e nuova* (Florence, 1932), 1:1-84; C. Tralza, 'Burckhardt e De Sanctis nella critica petrarchesca,' *Dipartimenti critici* (Bologna, 1920), 7-38.

¹⁰ G. Körting, *Petrarca's Leben und Werke* (Leipzig, 1878); idem, *Geschichte der Litterature Italiens im Zeitalter der Renaissance* (Leipzig, 1884); G. Voigt, *Die Wiederbelebung des classischen Altertums, oder das erste Jahrhundert des Humanismus*, 2 vols. (Berlin, 1859).

¹¹ P. de Nolhac, *Pétrarque et l'Humanisme*, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (Paris, 1907), 1:2.

¹² *ibid.*

similarly saw Petrarch's modernity as lying in the sense of individualism and subjectivism which arose out of his humanism. For Tatham – drawing on Körting's earlier work – Petrarch's humanism was an end in itself and, as such, the essence of his philosophical disinterest:

[T]he movement which he led has been justly called 'Humanism', because it started from a sense of the dignity and independence of man..., and because it recognised classical literature as a stage on which man had been able to play his part in complete moral freedom. ... He strove to make antiquity, not the mere handmaid of knowledge, but its inspiration, as theology had been for scholasticism. Thus Humanism became to him almost a religious enthusiasm rather than a new code of precepts.¹³

Other biographers occupied more with the reconstruction of Petrarch's inner self than with the details of his humanism gently concurred with the divergence which ottocento scholars had detected between the persona of the poet and the practices of the philosopher. Writing in 1909, Maud Jerrold detected in his poetry a distinctly modern 'sense of freedom and emancipation' and a peculiar consciousness of his individuality, but was unable to find traces of either consistency or profundity in his thought.¹⁴ For Jerrold, Petrarch was first and foremost a poet, and she consequently found it 'remarkable' that his philosophy should ever have attracted attention:

A veritable poet-painter, we are conscious sometimes of his idolatry of words: it is only given to the greatest minds perfectly to unite form and thought, and, when the latter is the weaker power of the two, the former will sometimes evaporate into sentimentality.¹⁵

In his biographical study (1930) – perhaps the most thorough of the first half of the twentieth century – Luigi Tonelli similarly followed Foscolo and earlier scholars in contending that Petrarch's outlook remained that of a poet. Although Petrarch had been studied with care and attention in the early part of the century, Tonelli approvingly noted that he attached importance not to systematic thought, but to fragmentary tendencies, appropriate to poets and artists.¹⁶

From roughly the 1940s onwards, Petrarch's position as the founding father of humanism began to be questioned more intensively and he has gradually come to be viewed

¹³ E. H. R. Tatham, *Francesco Petrarca: The First Modern Man of Letters*, 2 vols., (London, 1926), 2:27.

¹⁴ M. F. Jerrold, *Francesco Petrarca: Poet and Humanist* (London and New York, 1909), 324-5.

¹⁵ *ibid.*, 327.

¹⁶ L. Tonelli, *Petrarca* (Milan, 1930), 347: 'Anche come pensatore, il Petrarca è stato studiato con cura e attenzione: specie in questi ultimi tempi, che, con maggiore giustizia e più squisita storicità, si dà importanza, nel disegnare l'evoluzione del pensiero umano, alle stesse concezioni non sistematiche e alle semplici, frammentarie tendenze, proprie dei poeti ed artisti.'

as a participant in, rather than the instigator of a broad and complex cultural change. Instead of having been the figurehead of a new movement, as it were, Petrarch has increasingly been seen as having built on the heritage of such figures as Albertino Mussato and Lovato dei Lovati.¹⁷ This re-evaluation of his position in relation to other early humanists has been accompanied by a steady evolution in perceptions of his own humanism. Especially in recent years, his humanistic practices and his relationship with Antiquity have been subjected to closer scrutiny. Although Petrarch devoted much energy to the study and imitation of classical texts, he also drew much inspiration from Christian writers, and evidence has been adduced which suggests that his reading of Cicero, Seneca and Virgil – for example – was significantly influenced by his appreciation of St. Augustine's own relationship with the classics.¹⁸

As a consequence of attempts to uncover his sometimes complex reading practices and the interaction of classical and Christian influences has led to Petrarch's thought being studied more seriously. In an unfortunately brief paper published in 1947, for example, Dayton Phillips observed that it was 'high time ... for a detailed reconsideration of what Petrarch has said about his moral concerns' and the sentiment chimed with the tone of much scholarship since the mid-twentieth century.¹⁹ Petrarch's reputation as the 'first modern man', however, continues to exercise a certain influence and the fact that his influence on European culture relies on the reception of his vernacular verse and his humanism has tended to colour interest in his engagement with ethical questions. Although it has not been treated with the same disregard as in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, his moral philosophy has been – and continues to be – regarded comparatively lightly, with texts such as the *De vita solitaria* and the *De otio religioso* largely evading scholarly attention. Those studies which have addressed the subject have been inclined to view Petrarch as having consciously equivocated between frequently conflicting positions in moral philosophy as a

¹⁷ See, for example, R. Weiss, *The Dawn of Humanism in Italy* (London, 1947), 3ff; and more recently, R. G. Witt, *In the Footsteps of the Ancients. The Origins of Humanism from Lovato to Bruni* (Leiden, 2003).

¹⁸ Prominent studies include C. Calcaterra, *Nella selva del Petrarca* (Bologna, 1942); P. Courcelle, *Les Confessions de Saint Augustin dans la tradition littéraire* (Paris, 1963), esp. 329-50; P. P. Gerosa, *Umanesimo cristiano del Petrarca. Influenza agostiniana attinenze medievali* (Turin, 1966); K. Heitmann, 'L'insegnamento agostiniano nel *Secretum* del Petrarca,' *Studi petrarcheschi* 7 (1961): 187-93; C. E. Quillen, 'Plundering the Egyptians: Petrarch and Augustine's *De doctrina christiana*,' in E. D. English, ed., *Reading and Wisdom. The De doctrina christiana of Augustine in the Middle Ages* (Notre Dame, 1995), 153-72; idem, *Rereading the Renaissance: Petrarch, Augustine and the Language of Humanism* (Ann Arbor, 1998).

¹⁹ D. Phillips, 'Petrarch's Ethical Principles,' *Italica* 24/3 (Sept. 1947): 219-32, here 219; see also G. Gentile, 'Gli inizi dell'Umanesimo e Francesco Petrarca,' in E. Garin, ed., *Storia dei generi letterari: La filosofia*, 2 vols., (Milan, 1947), 1:146-96; G. Toffanin, 'La filosofia del Petrarca,' *Grande antologia filosofica* 6 (1964): 492-525.

result of a 'modernity' bound up either his humanistic preoccupations or his literary persona.²⁰ Indeed, while there has been some disagreement as to its exact identity, the notion of conflict has been the defining theme of evaluations of Petrarch's moral thought published since the 1940s.

Writing from a biographical perspective, Umberto Bosco – for example – has seen Petrarch as having been caught in a conflict between the desire for the eternal and the painful consciousness of the temporal.²¹ Aware always of the fleeting nature of all things, Bosco has contended that from his earliest years, Petrarch's preoccupation with this tension informed both his understanding of the pursuit of salvation, and his exploration of his unrequited love for Laura. Never seeking a full resolution, the conflict in Petrarch's thought became almost an end in itself, an end which consisted in a continuous, wilful ambivalence and inconstancy.²² The notion that Petrarch may have sought to construct a fully systematic moral philosophy which transcended this conflict is absent from Bosco's reading of his life and works.

Bosco's understanding of the conflict in his thought is framed around the contention that Petrarch's constant revision of his works revealed him to have been a man '*senza storia*', a figure whose intellectual development is all but impossible to reconstruct.²³ Many scholars have, however, dissented from this view and have instead described the tension in Petrarch's thought in terms of shifting allegiances to often conflicting philosophical schools. While he is perceived as having been deeply interested in questions of moral philosophy, he is seen never to have attempted to reconcile the different points of view which he embraced at various points in his life. Attention in this regard has tended to concentrate on the *Secretum*, which has been viewed both as the key to Petrarch's moral thought, and as the encapsulation of a deep philosophical inconsistency bound up with his reading practices. Carlo Calcaterra, for example, has attempted to suggest that the work is a patchwork of different sentiments which reflect a transition from a youthful fascination for classical literature to a later Christian morality occasioned by a period of religious crisis.²⁴ Believing the transition to have occurred in the reverse order, Hans Baron – along with Francisco Rico

²⁰ Aldo Scaglione has neatly summarised this point: '...the human condition that is... discovered by Petrarch's unending, unrelenting, merciless search is "modern" because it embodies the principle of dialectics, or to put it with Freud, the principle that the psyche ignores the rule of non-contradiction. The human condition is inherently ambiguous, ambivalent, wavering, dramatic, conflicting, and conflict must not only be comprehended but accepted.' A. Scaglione, 'Petrarch 1974: A Sketch for a Portrait,' in Scaglione, ed., *Francis Petrarch, Six Centuries Later*, 1-24, here 7.

²¹ Bosco, *Petrarcha*.

²² *ibid.*, 86.

²³ *ibid.*, 7, 9.

²⁴ C. Calcaterra, 'La concezione storica del Petrarca,' *Annali della Cattedra Petrarca* 9 (1939-40): 1-26; *idem*, *Nella selva del Petrarca* (Bologna, 1942), 1-18; 418ff.

– saw Petrarch as torn between an attachment to a broadly Augustinian moral theology and a Stoicism recovered primarily from the works of Cicero and Seneca.²⁵ Relying heavily on the imputation of conceptual adherence from quotation or citation, the perceived tension between a fideistic Augustinianism and a Stoicism founded on reason was similarly detected by Klaus Heitmann and appeared prominently in William Bouwsma's evaluation of Petrarch in his study of the 'two faces' of Renaissance humanism.²⁶

In tune with postmodern approaches to language as an end in itself, other scholars have acknowledged the presence of philosophical inconsistencies, but have chosen to present them as the outcome of a 'poetic' or 'rhetorical' approach to the practice of moral philosophy. Suggesting that Petrarch's understanding of ancient philosophy in particular 'was more characteristically that of a poet than a historian', Charles Trinkaus has argued that it was 'through the medium of his poetic understanding ... that he was incited to conceive and fulfil the roles of both rhetorician and moral philosopher.'²⁷ For Trinkaus, Petrarch 'thought philosophically as a poet': rather than seeking to construct a philosophical system founded on objective truth, he instead embraced a 'new mode of philosophical consciousness' which was founded on subjective experience.²⁸ Although wary of the ease with which they could be described or explained in such a way, Trinkaus tentatively indicates that the 'manifold contradictions' in Petrarch's thought – centring on broadly the same tension between classical philosophy and Christian theology detected by Baron, Rico and Heitmann – could be viewed as a product of the pioneering subjectivism which arose out of his ability to think 'philosophically as a poet'. In his study of eloquence and wisdom in Renaissance humanism, Jerrold Seigel expressed a similar viewpoint, although with specific reference to rhetoric.²⁹ For Seigel, Petrarch had a profound respect for the 'ideal of wisdom', but 'sometimes described true philosophy in such a way that cast doubt on its inferiority to

²⁵ H. Baron, *Petrarch's Secretum: Its Making and Its Meaning* (Princeton, 1985); idem, *From Petrarch to Leonardo Bruni. Studies in Humanistic and Political Literature* (Chicago and London, 1968); idem, 'Petrarch's *Secretum*: Was It Revised – and Why? The Draft of 1342-43 and the Later Changes,' *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 25 (1963):489-530, reprinted in a revised form in Baron, *From Petrarch to Leonardo Bruni*, 51-101.; F. Rico, *Vita u obra de Petrarca, vol. I, Lectura del "Secretum"* (Padua, 1974).

²⁶ W. J. Bouwsma, 'The Two Faces of Renaissance Humanism: Stoicism and Augustinianism in Renaissance Thought,' in H. A. Oberman and T. A. Brady Jnr., *Itinerarium Italicum: The Profile of the Italian Renaissance in the Mirror of its European Transformations. Dedicated to Paul Oskar Kristeller on the Occasion of his 70th Birthday*, (Leiden, 1975), 3-61; K. Heitmann, *Fortuna und Virtus: Eine Studie zu Petrarca's Lebensweisheit* (Cologne and Graz, 1957).

²⁷ C. Trinkaus, *The Poet as Philosopher. Petrarch and the Formation of Renaissance Consciousness* (New Haven and London, 1979), 2.

²⁸ *ibid.*, 2-3.

²⁹ J. E. Seigel, *Rhetoric and Philosophy in Renaissance Humanism. The Union of Eloquence and Wisdom, Petrarch to Valla* (Princeton, 1968).

wisdom.³⁰ In Seigel's analysis, Petrarch 'showed himself to be a true Ciceronian orator' and drew on different schools of philosophy as his immediate needs demanded without seeking to propound a completely consistent body of moral thought.³¹ On occasions, Petrarch is presented as having embraced a Stoic understanding of virtue, yet – because of the perceived rigor of Stoicism – often turned to Peripatetic ethics, which 'shared a common moral and intellectual perspective.'³²

Although Petrarch's attitude towards philosophy has been treated more seriously since the mid-twentieth century, it is nevertheless somewhat unfortunate that his moral thought continues to be regarded as lacking in consistency, and characterised as unsystematic or aphoristic. While the Romanticism which informed much nineteenth-century scholarship has been shed, the importance attached to Petrarch's humanistic interests and literary preoccupations as a result of his perceived 'modernity' seems to sustain an unwillingness to consider the possibility that he was both willing and able to construct a consistent and coherent moral philosophy. Few studies have attempted to consider Petrarch's works collectively as a deliberate attempt to contribute seriously to moral philosophy – and several texts remain woefully understudied – but even those which have adopted a broader scope have tended to presuppose a predisposition to foster and exploit inconsistencies. This has perhaps been fostered further by philological attempts to detect overlapping compositional layers in certain texts and by the intellectual environment from within which some studies have been written. Particularly when considering the relationship between eloquence and philosophy in Petrarch's thought, for example, some scholars appear to have been influenced by contemporary philosophical notions of language as an end in itself to a degree which colours their interpretation of the texts.

Despite equivocating over the tension between worldly desires and the possibility of salvation in the *Canzoniere*, and undergoing a continual process of intellectual development, it seems unnecessary to assume – as many have done – that Petrarch either saw moral questions as undeserving of systematic consideration, or prioritised literary considerations over philosophical consistency. His frequent quotations from and allusions to apparently contradictory schools of philosophy, together with his pervasive interest in literary imitation, initially appear to offer some grounds for granting credence to the imputation of inconsistency, but at a methodological level, it does not seem unreasonable to treat such evidence with a degree of caution. As Martin McLaughlin and Thomas Greene have demonstrated, however, Petrarch's approach to imitation was far from slavish and his

³⁰ *ibid.*, 35.

³¹ *ibid.*, 57.

³² *ibid.*, 56.

practice of emulation was constructed around his independence of mind.³³ Similarly, alluring though citations may appear, it is little appreciated that quotation need not imply a deeper conceptual adherence, and the possibility that gnomic references might mask an underlying consistency has been significantly underexplored. Moreover, despite the greater attention that has been given to Petrarch's relationship with St. Augustine in particular, it seems that further consideration deserves to be given to Christian theology's capacity to have served both as a lens through which to read classical thought, and as a loom on which to weave a coherent moral philosophy using ancient threads.

While both must be treated with some degree of caution, Petrarch's own evaluation of his work and the opinion of his readers in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries seem to give grounds not only to consider the possibility of coherence in his writings on moral philosophy, but also to temper the suggestion that his classical and poetic interests inclined him towards inconsistency. In the *Posteritati*, Petrarch saw moral philosophy and poetry as being of at least equal status. Indeed, the two are implicitly linked, and poetry – which he abandoned for the study of sacred literature in his later years – is described as having been nothing more than 'embellishment', while the pursuit of Antiquity is presented as having been a pleasurable release from the torments of his own age rather than as a substitute for philosophical enquiry. Providing little evidence for a sense of divergence between the two, he appears to have regarded himself as much as a moral philosopher as a poet and clearly sought to be remembered as such.

Petrarch's wish did not go unheeded. Although most – such as the doctor Giovanni Dondi dall'Orologio³⁴ and the copyist Giovanni Malpaghini da Ravenna³⁵ – restricted themselves to comparing him favourably with eminent figures of Antiquity or claiming a prominent position for him in literary history, many contemporaries who wrote in commemoration expressed the view that he deserved to be remembered both for his literary achievements and for his contributions to moral philosophy. In some ways mediated by an appreciation of Petrarch's own character, eulogists saw no tension between poetry or

³³ T. M. Greene, *The Light in Troy. Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry* (New Haven and London, 1982), 81-146; M. L. McLaughlin, *Literary Imitation in the Italian Renaissance. The Theory and Practice of Literary Imitation From Dante to Bembo* (Oxford, 1995), 22-49.

³⁴ The text of Giovanni Dondi dall'Orologio's letter to Giovanni dall'Aquila is in A. Zardo, *Il Petrarca e i Carraresi* (Milan, 1887), 282-5. For a brief discussion of the work, see C. Biancha, 'Nascita del mito dell'umanista nei compiani in morte del Petrarca,' in *Il Petrarca Latino e le origini dell'umanesimo, Quaderni petrarcheschi* 9-10 (1992-3): 293-313, here 298-300; B. G. Kohl, 'Mourners of Petrarch,' in Scaglione, ed., *Francis Petrarch, Six Centuries Later*, 340-52, here 341-2.

³⁵ For Giovanni Malpaghini da Ravenna's *Conquestus de morte Petrarce*, see R. Sabbadini, *Giovanni da Ravenna, insigne figura d'umanista* (Como, 1924), 248-9. See Biancha, 'Nascita del mito dell'umanista nei compiani in morte del Petrarca,' 300-1; Kohl, 'Mourners of Petrarch,' 343-4.

humanism and philosophy, and even saw his classically-inspired eloquence as having accompanied coherent moral thought.

On 24th July 1374, six days after his death, a collection of eminent personages and admirers – including Francesco il Vecchio da Carrara – attended Petrarch's funeral in Padua, and were addressed by his friend, the Augustinian canon Bonaventura Badoer.³⁶ The theme of Badoer's oration was taken from psalm 38 ('*cor meum conturbatum est in me*'), and – as was appropriate – was devoted largely to lamenting Petrarch's passing and recalling his laudable characteristics.³⁷ A devout and pious man given to frequent prayer, Petrarch was, Badoer proclaimed, at once the most excellent poet and the most devoted son of Christ, deserving comparison with such holy figures as St. Paul and David. A theologian, historian, orator and poet equally, the white-haired Petrarch had drawn on both wisdom and eloquence to show men how to live with fortune both fair and foul in the *De remediis utriusque fortune*, a work which Badoer singled out for particular mention.³⁸ Later in the year, the poet Franco Sacchetti composed a commemorative verse which similarly mentioned Petrarch's moral rectitude alongside his erudition and antiquarianism, but which also tellingly contrasted his heavenly repose with the hellish fate of the contemptible philosophers Epicurus and Averroes.³⁹

Yet more telling is Coluccio Salutati's letter to Roberto Guidi, Count of Battifolle, written on 16th August 1374.⁴⁰ Despite not having met Petrarch, Salutati knew his works well and was fulsome in his praise. In his literary studies, Petrarch 'flashed out so wonderfully' that he seemed 'easily to surpass any of the ancients you could oppose to him.'⁴¹ His eloquence, Salutati believed, was unsurpassed. Rather than having been pursued for its own sake, however, this eloquence was employed for a very specific purpose. Just as He had given his creation reason to command his desires, so God had given man eloquence 'so that

³⁶ On Petrarch's friendship with Bonaventura Badoer and his brother Bonsembiante, see, for example, U. Mariani, *Il Petrarca e gli Agostiniani*, Edizioni di storia e letteratura, (Rome, 1956), 79-85. For an account of Petrarch's funeral, see Jerrold, *Francesco Petrarca*, 242-3.

³⁷ For the text of Bonaventura's oration, see A. Solerti, *Le vite di Dante, Petrarca e Boccaccio scritte fine al secolo decimosesto* (Milan, 1904), 273-4. For a discussion of the text, see Biancha, 'Nascita del mito dell'umanista nei compianti in morte del Petrarca,' 293-7; Kohl, 'Mourners of Petrarch,' 342-3.

³⁸ Solerti, *Le vite*, 273: 'Caput eius et capilli candidi tamquam lana alba et tamquam nix; oculi eius velut flamma ignis et vox illius tamquam vox aquarum multarum sicut ex habundantia sapientiae et eloquentiae suae, et de ore eius gladius ex utraque parte acutus, quo scilicet docuit in adversis non deficere nec in prosperis defigere mentem, ut expresse prescripsit in libro quem fecit de remediis utriusque fortunae.'

³⁹ F. Sacchetti, *Il libro delle rime*, ed. A. Chiari (Bari, 1936), 179-83.

⁴⁰ English translation in D. Thompson and A. F. Nagel, eds. and trans., *The Three Crowns of Florence. Humanist Assessments of Dante, Petrarca and Boccaccio* (New York, 1972), 3-13. For a discussion of this letter, see, for example, Kohl, 'Mourners of Petrarch,' 347-9; A. von Martin, *Coluccio Salutati und das humanistische Lebensideal* (Leipzig, 1916), 17-21.

⁴¹ Thompson and Nagel, *The Three Crowns of Florence*, 5.

if his neighbour's reason has been put to sleep by corrupt behaviour or by the gross body's burden, he will have the means to rouse him with the fires of mutual affection.⁴² For Salutati, it was in this marriage of eloquence and moral purpose that Petrarch's achievement lay:

In the liberal arts, you can see from his writings how fit his nature was. But good God, how he excelled in philosophy! The divine gift is known to be the governess of all virtues and (to borrow a word of Cicero's) the expeller of vices and the mistress of all arts and sciences. I do not mean that philosophy which the modern sophists wonder at in the schools with vain, windy boastings and impudent garrulity; but rather that which refines spirits, builds virtue, washes away the filth of vice and throws light on the truth of all things without quibbling disputations. Let them rejoice in that former philosophy, those who take delight in devising 'indissoluble' arguments blown together with great toil, those who are moved by the glory of scholastic training. We revere the newer philosophy and embrace it with all our mind's strength. Consider in the light of this philosophy the poems, letters and books which that man of divine genius published while alive, and you will see how proficient he was in it. As for that priestess of all sciences – philosophy's philosophy, so to speak – which probes the secrets of divinity, although it seems to exceed the limits of knowledge I would be hard put to express with what an able mind he drank of it, with what a clear intellect he absorbed it – as can be inferred from a consideration of his works.⁴³

Although Petrarch was not a philosopher in the mould of St. Thomas Aquinas, for example, Salutati believed that he nevertheless actively pursued divine truth for the sake of inculcating virtue and exterminating vice in his readers. Rather than being set in contrast to his philosophy, or regarded as an inferior assemblage of thought, Salutati clearly contended that Petrarch's poetry should be read through the lens of this commitment to the elaboration and communication of a clear moral philosophy.

Outside of Italy, Petrarch's reputation in the decades immediately following his death shows if anything a stronger bias towards moral philosophy. Far from having being seen as nurturing a disinterest in ethical questions or indulging in aphoristic inconsistency, Petrarch's works appear to have been perceived as positive contributions to moral philosophy which merited respect and admiration. At the very end of the fourteenth century, the Frenchman Pierre Flamenc referred to Petrarch as a 'holy man of God', while also noting his renown as a laureate.⁴⁴ For Jean de Montreuil, writing in around 1407, he was a 'most devout catholic and very famous moral philosopher'.⁴⁵ The same opinion was shared by readers in the Low Countries throughout the fifteenth century. Although Rudolf Agricola is

⁴² *ibid.*, 6.

⁴³ *ibid.*, 5-6, quoting Cicero, *Tusc.*, V, ii, 5.

⁴⁴ Quoted in N. Mann, 'Petrarch and Humanism The Paradox of Posterity' in A. S. Bernardo, ed., *Francesco Petrarca, Citizen of the World. Proceedings of the World Petrarch Congress, Washington D.C., April 6-13 1974* (Padua and Albany, 1980), 287-99, here 290.

⁴⁵ *ibid.*

unusual, 'the mass of evidence points in the direction of the ascetic and medieval moralist rather than of the humanist scholar.'⁴⁶ In England, John Lydgate similarly stressed the importance of Petrarch's moral treatises in the *Fall of Princes*, written for the Duke of Gloucester in the early 1430s.⁴⁷

With only rare exceptions, Petrarch's reception in Northern Europe in the period 1374-c.1470 is, of course, primarily a result of the circulation of his works in an intellectual world whose *lingua franca* was Latin and the important role played by religious communities in the early copying of his writings.⁴⁸ Chaucer aside, Petrarch's Italian verses appear to have been unknown until the very end of the fifteenth century. Of the known manuscripts, the most popular were, in descending order, the *De remediis utriusque fortune*, the *Historia Griseldis* – which was often read as a 'moralizing and allegorical story on the Christian soul' in this period⁴⁹ –, the *Psalmi penitenciales*, *De vita solitaria*, *Secretum* and the *Bucolicum carmen*.⁵⁰ While this necessarily colours the evidence, however, the dissemination of texts need not detract from the fact that readers of his Latin works viewed him not as an eclectic humanist, but as a serious and even venerable moral philosopher. Such an opinion sits uneasily with the imputation of wilful inconsistency in a poet of *dissidio*.

The following thesis attempts to demonstrate that, far from having been a contradictory thinker who engaged selectively and unsystematically with ethical questions, Petrarch deserves to be considered as a consistent and coherent moral philosopher who engaged constructively with the question of virtue in dialogue with a multiplicity of classical, patristic and medieval texts. In an attempt to redress the omissions of previous studies, attention will focus primarily on Petrarch's Latin works, especially treatises such as the *Secretum*, *De otio religioso* and *De vita solitaria*. Although it too shall play an important role, the *Canzoniere* shall not be accorded priority and shall be viewed as an adjunct to Petrarch's other works, rather than as a lens through which to read his moral philosophy. The analysis will be based on a close reading of the original texts, but the methods employed shall also involve the application of philological and palaeographical techniques, and a detailed consideration of Petrarchan historiography. The thesis is divided into five sections.

⁴⁶ *ibid.* On Petrarch's reception in the Low Countries, see also J. Ijsewijn, 'The Coming of Humanism to the Low Countries,' in H. A. Oberman and T. A. Brady, eds., *Itinerarium Italicum. The Profile of the Italian Renaissance in the Mirror of its European Transformations. Dedicated to Paul Oskar Kristeller on the occasion of his 70th birthday* (Leiden, 1972), 193-204, esp. 203-9; M. Dykmans, 'Les premiers rapports de Petrarque avec les Pays-Bas,' *Bulletin de l'Institut Historique Belge de Rome* 20 (1939): 51-122.

⁴⁷ Mann, 'Petrarch and Humanism', 292.

⁴⁸ Ijsewijn, 'The Coming of Humanism to the Low Countries,' 204-5.

⁴⁹ *ibid.*, 204.

⁵⁰ Mann, 'Petrarch and Humanism', 289.

In the first chapter, Petrarch's understanding of the idea of virtue is examined and attention is focussed on the *Secretum*. A crucial text for an analysis of Petrarch's moral thought, the *Secretum* has been central to the argument that he experienced an intellectual 'crisis' at some point in the 1340s and has been of key importance to the implication of philosophical inconsistency. This chapter concentrates on two episodes in the first book in which elements of Stoic ethics are supposed to have been introduced into an otherwise 'Augustinian' treatment of worldly desires. Examining points of comparison with passages in the *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia* and *Invective contra medicum*, the degree to which Petrarch drew on patterns of thought recovered primarily from Cicero and Seneca is questioned and distinctions between forms of 'Augustinianism' known to him are brought into closer focus. Particular attention is given to Petrarch's knowledge of St. Augustine's *De vera religione* and *Soliloquies*, and to his appreciation of the saint's use of classical thought in relation to ideas of *voluntas* and *ratio*. Petrarch's understanding of prayer and grace is considered in a final section, and parallels often drawn with the theology of Martin Luther are brought under scrutiny.

The second chapter turns from the abstract notion of virtue to the ideal of the virtuous life and examines the concept of *otium*. Distinguishing between different forms of the word and the meanings attached to the term in the classical, patristic and medieval traditions, this chapter concentrates on the identity of *otium* in the *De otio religioso*, a text which has been examined primarily for the insight it provides into Petrarch's understanding of the relationship between monastic and secular modes of living. The manner in which Petrarch envisaged *otium* as a response to despair and worldly desire is examined in detail, and the heritage of the concept is considered in comparison to texts he is known to have possessed. On this basis, the meaning of *otium* as a term used to describe a life of virtue is finally related to the moral programme which the *Secretum* was intended to inculcate.

The third chapter continues the investigation into the identity of the virtuous life and looks at *solitudo*, which Petrarch frequently used as an analogue – and even a synonym – of *otium*. Looking at the *De vita solitaria*, the *Canzoniere*, and numerous letters in Latin verse and prose, this chapter begins with an evaluation of the suggestion that Petrarch modelled his concept of *solitudo* after Stoic and Epicurean ideas derived from authors such as Cicero, Virgil, Horace and Seneca. Having surveyed the literary motifs shared with the classical tradition, the analysis then moves to consider the manner in which Petrarch saw *solitudo* as a 'solitudo animi', and as a freedom from 'res aliena'. Examining the interplay of classical imagery and elements of Augustinian theology, the chapter concludes by looking at the key

role played by the countryside in Petrarch's treatment of *solitudo*, and by drawing comparisons with *otium*.

In the fourth chapter, the idea of friendship is considered. In contrast to his many friendships, Petrarch's understanding of the concept of *amicitia* has been studied only very little, but is nevertheless an integral part of the manner in which he conceived of the virtuous life. Where it has been studied, Petrarch's *amicitia* is seen as having been constructed in direct imitation of Cicero and – to a lesser extent – Seneca. Using evidence drawn from the *Familiares*, the *Seniles*, the *De remediis utriusque fortune* and the *De vita solitaria*, this chapter subjects this claim to detailed analysis, and the role played by alternative sources of inspiration, such as St. Augustine's *De vera religione*, is considered. Especially in relation to a crucial passage in the *De remediis utriusque fortune*, Petrarch's use of Cicero's writings is questioned and the interplay of classical, patristic and medieval influences is examined in relation to the connection between *amicitia*, *amor* and *virtus*.

Having reconstructed Petrarch's conception both of virtue and the virtuous life, the fifth chapter returns to the relationship between eloquence and moral philosophy in his thought. As has already been observed, this is at the heart of historical constructions of Petrarch's approach to moral philosophy and the determining role commonly attributed to his understanding of eloquence underpins claims of inconsistency in philosophical matters. Having evaluated the methodological foundations of some of the most important studies of the topic, this chapter reconstructs the development of Petrarch's thought on the relationship between eloquence and moral philosophy, running from the ninth book of the *Africa* and the Coronation Oration to the *De remediis utriusque fortune*. Particular attention is given to the *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia* and the *Invective contra medicum*, and the suggestion that Petrarch attempted to erect poetry as a source of theological or philosophical truth is analysed closely. In a comparative section, Petrarch's conception of eloquence and moral philosophy is then examined in relation to classical treatises such as Cicero's *De oratore* and Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria*, to late Antique texts such as Boethius' *De consolatio philosophiae*, to medieval works such as William of Conches' commentaries, and – crucially – to St. Augustine's *De doctrina christiana*. Finally, eloquence is placed in the broader scheme of Petrarch's moral thought, and his conception of poetry and rhetoric located within the context of the philosophy studied in previous chapters.

The Idea of Virtue: Stoicism and ‘Augustinianism’ in the *Secretum*

1. Happiness, virtue, vice and *accidia*

In the *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, Petrarch described how four Venetian friends were ‘amazed and silently angered’ by his disdain for their Aristotelianism.¹ Attempting to redress this perceived slight, these friends would often instigate a discussion of Aristotle’s philosophy as a means of providing themselves with the opportunity to consign Petrarch ‘to the ranks of the ignorant’.² Defending himself, Petrarch pointed out that not merely was it not blasphemous to question Aristotle’s views, but it was in fact sacrilegious to *adhere* to many of the philosopher’s opinions.³ Aristotle, he believed, had ‘wandered from the path’ not only in unimportant matters, but also in those major respects which touched on man’s salvation.⁴ Although Aristotle had written on the question of happiness in the *Ethics*, he was ‘so completely ignorant of true happiness that any devout old woman, or any faithful fisherman, shepherd or peasant, is happier, if not more subtle, in recognising it.’⁵ It was not that Petrarch lacked respect for Aristotle, but rather that he believed Aristotle’s conception of

Earlier versions of this chapter were presented at conferences in Edinburgh (7th July 2006), St. Andrews (13th November 2006) and San Antonio (10th March 2007), as well as at the Denys Hay Seminar, University of Edinburgh (17th October 2006).

¹ *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia* IV, 48: ‘Stupere illi, et taciti subirasci...’; text and English translation in *Invectives*, ed. and trans. D. Marsh, (Cambridge MA and London, 2003), 264.

² *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia* IV, 47: ‘Sic incautus usus, plurimum insidiis circumventus, ignorantium gregibus ignorans misceor’; Marsh, 264.

³ Although Petrarch included the *Ethics* in his list of his favourite books and his copy of the text is still extant (Paris BN lat. 6458), it is unclear how fully Petrarch knew Aristotle. B. Ullman, *Studies in the Italian Renaissance*, Edizioni di Storia e Letterature, (Rome, 1955), 117-137. On disagreement over Petrarch’s knowledge of Aristotle, see, for example, P. de Nolhac, *Petrarque et l’Humanisme*, 2 vols., 2nd ed., (Paris, 1907), 2:147-52; C. Trinkaus, *The Poet as Philosopher: Petrarch and the Formation of the Renaissance Consciousness* (New Haven and London, 1979), 15-21.

⁴ *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia* IV, 49: ‘credo hercle, nec dubito, illum non in rebus tantum parvis, quarum parvus et minime periculosus est error, sed in maximis et spectantibus ad salutis summam aberrasse tota, ut aiunt, via.’; Marsh, 264. c.f. *Ps.* 119:50-1.

⁵ *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, IV, 49: ‘audebo dicere ... veram illum felicitatem sic penitus ignorasse, ut in eius cognitione, non dico subtilior, sed felicius fuerit vel quilibet anus pia, vel piscator pastore fidelis, vel agricola.’; Marsh, 264-5.

happiness to have been built on unsure foundations.⁶ Citing St. Augustine's *De Trinitate*, he contended that without an understanding of immortality or faith, it was impossible to comprehend the *vera felicitas* and, by implication, also impossible to derive a true system of moral philosophy.⁷ Not having recognised this, Aristotle and other philosophers 'rejoiced over nothing, like people happy in their dreams' and were oblivious to the fact that, in confining themselves to the mortal, 'they were miserable'.⁸ Only the 'thunderclap of imminent death would wake them to their misery'.

This passage reveals the central importance of *felicitas* in shaping Petrarch's interest in moral philosophy. Never doubting the coherence or rigor of Aristotle's argument in the *Ethics*, Petrarch's objection that it was founded on an inadequate definition of happiness indicates that he too saw *felicitas* as being the primary motivation for moral enquiry. For Petrarch, as for St. Augustine, *felicitas* could only be had in the eternal life to come, while the attempt to find happiness in mortal existence alone could lead to nothing but sorrow.

The opposition of mortality and immortality in relation to *felicitas* had deep implications for Petrarch's understanding of the dynamic between happiness and virtue and these are described in the first book of the *Africa*. At the beginning of the epic, the sleeping Scipio Africanus is visited by his dead father, Publius Cornelius, in a dream. In the exchange which follows, Publius attempts both to console Scipio's grief and to inspire him in life. As in Petrarch's discussion with the deceased Laura in the *Triumphus mortis*,⁹ Publius shows Scipio the bliss he currently enjoyed and earthly and heavenly existence are powerfully contrasted. To earthly existence come

Grief and groaning and a mind uncertain of the future
And fear of death and the thousand most wretched cares
Of our world, among which we spend in shadows
The best times of our life and our finest years
[But] in *this* place [i.e. Heaven] is undefiled day, which eternal light
makes fair,
Which neither consuming grief nor sorrowful murmurs disturb,
[And] which never burns with hate...¹⁰

⁶ *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, IV, 50; Marsh, 266.

⁷ *ibid.*; c.f. Augustine, *De Trinitate*, 13.8.11.

⁸ *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, IV, 51: 'Fingebant sibi ille et reliqui quod optabant, et quod naturaliter optant omnes, cuiusque optare potest nemo, felicitatem dico, quam verbis ornatam, absentem velut amicam canentes, non videbant, gaudebantque de nichilo, prorsus quasi somnio beati, vere autem miseri vicineque mortis tonitru ad miseriam excitandi, apertisque oculis conspecturi quenam esset illa felicitas, de qua somniando tractaverant.'; Marsh, 266.

⁹ *Triumphus mortis*, II, 37-39; text in *Rime, Trionfi e Poesi Latine*, ed. F. Neri, G. Martellotti, E. Bianchi and N. Sapegno, *La Letteratura Italiana, Storia e Testi* 6, (Milan & Naples, 1951), 481-562, here 525.

¹⁰ *Africa*, I, 214-221:

'Namque hactenus ire
Et dolor et gemitus et mens incerta futuri
Atque metus mortis mundique miserrima nostri

As in the *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, Petrarch indicates that true happiness can be found only after death. Since the corporeal world is continually in flux, any attempt to find *felicitas* while on earth could lead only to grief.¹¹

The realisation that happiness could only be found in heaven, however, presents the hero of the *Africa* with a problem. Introduced to his dead uncle, Gnaeus Cornelius, Scipio asks why, 'if life endures beyond the grave' and no *felicitas* can be enjoyed during a mortal existence, it is necessary for him to linger on earth.¹² Gnaeus Cornelius explains that even though on earth one may not know the *vera felicitas*, mortal life is a trial which must be endured.¹³ If Scipio wishes to attain immortal happiness, he must merit this reward. 'A life adorned with virtue', in which the breast is filled with piety, is 'assuredly the way to Heaven'.¹⁴

As the discussion proceeds, it becomes apparent that, just as *felicitas* is defined in relation to the opposition of the mortal and the immortal, so *virtus* may be understood in terms of the opposition of the body and the soul. Developing his earlier point, Gnaeus Cornelius explains that a man who aspires to the *vera felicitas* must serve the soul while in this flesh.¹⁵ Being of heavenly origin and desirous of happiness after death, the soul must not be allowed to become forgetful of its 'proper seat' through contact with the body.

In other works, the relationship between body and soul, between mortal and immortal is manifested more clearly in the opposition of *virtus* and *voluptas*. Virtue, the preserve of the soul, is juxtaposed with the pleasures of the flesh, and Petrarch frequently used allegory to explain this pairing. Drawing on a long tradition of interpretation, he viewed

Milia curarum, rapide quibus optima vite
Tempora et in tenebris meliores ducimus annos:
Illic pura dies, quam lux eterna serenat,
Quam nec luctus edax nec tristia murmura turbant,
Non odia incendunt ...'

Text in *Africa*, ed. N. Festa, Edizione nazionale delle opere di Francesco Petrarca, (Florence, 1926)

¹¹ This underpins Petrarch's critique of Epicureanism. See, for example, *Fam.* II, 3, 4.

¹² *Africa*, I, 460-464: '“Dic,” ait is: “si vita manet post busta, quod almus
Testatur genitor, sique hec est vera perennis,
Nostra autem morti similis, quid demoror ultra
In terris? quin huc potius, quacumque licebit,
Evolat assurgens animus tellure relicta?”'

¹³ *Africa*, I, 465-467.

¹⁴ *Africa*, I, 483-489: 'Pietas sit pectoris hospes
Sancta tui morumque comes, que debita virtus
Magna patri, patrie maior, sed maxima summo
Ac perfecta Deo; quibus exornata profecto
Vita via in celum est, que vos huc tramite recto
Tunc revehat cum summa dies exemerit istud
Carnis onus pureque animam transmiserit aure.'

¹⁵ *Africa*, I, 474-478.

the *Aeneid*, for example, as an epic allegory of the tension between *virtus* and *voluptas*. As Craig Kallendorf has explained, Petrarch saw Troy as an emblem of ‘the debased life that Aeneas must leave behind so that “armed with virtue” ... he sets out towards Italy through the uncertainties and instabilities of life.’¹⁶ Writing to Dionigi da Borgo San Sepulcro in January 1333, Petrarch expressed this as advice. Although no true happiness could be had in this life, it was nevertheless possible to approach the *vera felicitas* by steering clear of bodily pleasures. Forsaking riches, the applause of the vulgar mob, power and pleasure for virtue, a man may shed his miseries and merit his reception into eternal bliss after death.¹⁷

Despite his advice to Dionigi da Borgo San Sepulcro, however, the opposition of virtue and *voluptas* was the cause of great difficulty for Petrarch and served as the subject for his most searching moral analysis. The *Secretum* – or, more properly, the *De secreto conflictu curarum mearum* – constitutes an attempt to engage with the psychological tension between worldly desire and a longing for the *vera felicitas* which can be enjoyed only after death. Although some debate has surrounded the autobiographical accuracy and intended audience of the text,¹⁸ the *Secretum* takes as its starting point at least a representation of Petrarch’s moral dilemma and offers an exploration of the means by which *voluptas* might be spurned and *virtus* embraced.

The *Secretum* begins with ‘Franciscus’ worrying anxiously about death and consumed by misery.¹⁹ Miraculously, Lady Truth appears and tells him that he is suffering from an improper affection for the pleasures of the world.²⁰ Urging him to look for true happiness in the eternal, she invites ‘Augustinus’ to guide him away from the temporal and

¹⁶ C. Kallendorf, *In Praise of Aeneas: Virgil and Epideictic Rhetoric in the Early Italian Renaissance* (Hanover and London, 1989), 28-9. See also E. Müller-Boachat, ‘Allegorese und Allegorie: Zu Petrarca’s Vergil-Deutung (*Seniles* IV.5),’ in F. Schalk, ed., *Petrarca 1304-1374: Beiträge zu Werk und Wirkung* (Frankfurt am Main, 1975), 198-208, here 205-6. *Sen.* IV, 5; *Invective contra medicum*, IV, 175.

¹⁷ *Fam.* IV, 2, 6.

¹⁸ H. Baron, *Petrarch’s Secretum: Its Making and Its Meaning* (Princeton, 1985), 185-96, 208-14; V. Kahn, ‘The Figure of the Reader in Petrarch’s *Secretum*,’ *PMLA* 100/2 (March 1985):154-66; E. Loos, ‘Die Hauptsünde der *acedia* in Dantes *Commedia* und Petrarca’s *Secretum*,’ in F. Schalk, ed., *Petrarca 1302-1374: Beiträge zu Werk und Wirkung* (Frankfurt am Main, 1975), 156-83, here 172; F. Rico, *Vita u obra de Petrarca, vol. 1, Lectura del “Secretum”* (Padua, 1974), 32-3, 193-4.

¹⁹ *Secretum*, proem.; text edited by Enrico Carrara in *Prose*, ed. G. Martellotti, P. G. Ricci, E. Carrara, E. Bianchi, (Milan and Naples, 1955), 22-218, here, 22. D. Marsh, *The Quattrocento Dialogue* (Cambridge MA, 1980), 44. In an early essay on the evolution of the *Secretum*, Baron suggested that the proem ‘seems to place the location unequivocally in the Vaucluse [*sic.*]’ H. Baron, *From Petrarch to Leonardo Bruni. Studies in Humanistic and Political Literature* (Chicago and London, 1968), 62. Although Baron might not be altogether wrong in highlighting the possibility that Petrarch might have been willing to allow his reader (whoever he might have been) to identify the setting of the proem with Vaucluse, an awareness of the literary precedents for the trope and a recognition of the paucity of direct evidence for a definite location in the proem itself seem to indicate rather that it was intended as a deliberately ‘other-worldly’ setting in imitation of Boethius and Augustine.

²⁰ *Secretum*, proem; *Prose*, 22.

shake him free of his improper desires. In the three days which follow, Augustinus dissects Franciscus' affection for worldly delights and uncovers the nature of his unhappiness. He tells Franciscus that he is guilty – to one degree or another – of the seven deadly sins, but succumbed most frequently to the attractions of love and glory.²¹ Being rooted in the mortal, these attractions bring Franciscus nothing but sorrow and he is content to admit that it is the 'want, grief, ignominy, illness, death and all such ills' of human life which causes him such anxiety.²²

During second day's discussion, however, Augustinus devotes particular attention to that 'deadly plague of the soul which the moderns call *accidia*, the ancients *egritudo*.'²³ It is a malady – best translated as 'spiritual sloth', 'melancholy' or even 'despair' – from which Franciscus has suffered for a considerable time and, unlike his other sins, it is capable of paralysing him for days on end. It causes all things to seem hard, sorrowful and horrendous, and it opens the way to desperation and destruction.²⁴ Explaining further, Franciscus reveals

that his grief comes not from any single blow of Fortune, but a concurrence of mishaps. It springs from the cumulative discouragement which the consideration of the miseries of the human condition, the memory of past hardships, and the fear of the future jointly produce.²⁵

In addition to his persistent indulgence of other sins, especially the desire for love and glory, Franciscus is weighed down by his *accidia*, through which all things are made displeasing; he is tied to the fickleness of others, and oppressed by the frailty of his body.²⁶

As Siegfried Wenzel has shown, Franciscus' *accidia*, which is both the analogue and culmination of his other sins, has a certain affinity with the Ciceronian and Senecan affect of *aegritudo*, but is nevertheless 'firmly based on the vice as it was defined and taught by scholastic theologians.'²⁷ Bound up with the opposition of *virtus* and *voluptas*, and of *felicitas* and *fortuna*, it generated what St. Thomas Aquinas described as a '*tristitia de spirituali bono*'²⁸ and what Hugh of St. Victor understood as an '*ex confusione mentis nata tristitia, sive taedium et amaritudo animi immoderata, qua iucunditas spiritualis*

²¹ *Secretum*, III; *Prose*, 130-32.

²² *Secretum*, I: '... qui non intelligat egestatem, dolores, ignominiam, denique morbos ac mortem aliaque huius generis...' *Prose*, 30.

²³ *Secretum*, II: 'Habet te funestra quedam pestis animi, quam accidiam moderni, veteres egritudinem dixerunt.' *Prose*, 106.

²⁴ *Secretum*, II; *Prose*, 106.

²⁵ S. Wenzel, *The Sin of Sloth: Acedia in Medieval Thought and Literature* (Chapel Hill NC, 1967), 157.

²⁶ *Secretum*, II; *Prose*, 116-8.

²⁷ S. Wenzel, 'Petrarch's *accidia*,' *Studies in the Renaissance* 8 (1961): 36-48, here 47; see also Wenzel, *The Sin of Sloth*, 162.

²⁸ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 35; *De malo*, q. 11. quoted at Wenzel, 'Petrarch's *accidia*,' 41.

extinguitur.²⁹ The *accidia* from which Franciscus suffered, as David of Augsburg put it, 'inclines to despair, diffidence and suspicions, and sometimes drives its victim to suicide when he is oppressed by unreasonable grief.'³⁰ At the same time, it 'is a very subjective lament at lack of means, lack of full personal independence,'³¹ although, like love and the desire for glory, it too is associated with the immoderate love of the mortal world and stands at the core of the problem of how *virtus* is to be embraced and *felicitas* merited.

2. A Question of Attribution: Petrarch, Augustine and the Classics

The *Secretum* was intended to address the misery from which Franciscus suffered.³² Taking as its starting point the fact that he was made unhappy by the instability and uncertainty of the world, and further consumed with spiritual sloth and melancholy, it set out to provide a blueprint for the moral behaviour which was necessary for him to embrace virtue and merit the *vera felicitas*. In the proem, Lady Truth returns to the two poles of Petrarch's moral topography and tells Franciscus that he must turn his gaze from the mortal to the eternal.³³ Although this is a perfectly succinct summary of the change which it was necessary for Franciscus to make, however, it is a far from complete prognosis. As Lady Truth turns to Augustinus for assistance, it is evident from Franciscus' apparent lack of understanding that a fuller analysis of his moral condition is necessary.³⁴ If he is to turn from the mortal to the eternal as Lady Truth had suggested, the underlying reason for Franciscus' attachment to *voluptas* must be uncovered before Augustinus can offer a detailed explanation of the means by which virtue might be apprehended.

Despite its importance to an understanding of Petrarch's conception of virtue, the *Secretum* is nevertheless a highly problematic text and has frequently been viewed as a confused work composed during a period of profound personal intellectual change. This confusion has been interpreted in a variety of ways and is frequently related to the question of dating, but in each case, Petrarch is presented as having failed to offer a fully coherent solution to Franciscus' misery because of his changing attitudes towards contrasting philosophical traditions. For Carlo Calcaterra, for example, the *Secretum* was the product of a period of religious 'crisis' between 1342 and 1343 in which the classical and humanistic

²⁹ Hugh of St. Victor, *De sacram.* III, 13, 1; quoted at Wenzel, 'Petrarch's *accidia*,' 45.

³⁰ David of Augsburg, *Formula novitiorum*, 51, quoted at Wenzel, *The Sin of Sloth*, 160.

³¹ Wenzel, *The Sin of Sloth*, 162.

³² Note the alternative, although unconvincing, reading offered in Kahn, 'The Figure of the Reader,' 155.

³³ *Secretum*, proem; *Prose*, 22.

³⁴ *Secretum*, proem; *Prose*, 24.

enthusiasms of his youth were replaced with more overtly Christian concerns.³⁵ The 'confusion' of the *Secretum* is, however, most commonly described in terms of an use of incompatible elements of Stoic philosophy and Augustinian theology. Although the issue of chronology is not considered closely, the idea of a 'crisis' – in which Petrarch moved from Christian to classical sources of inspiration – is emphasised in the work of Klaus Heitmann, Charles Trinkaus and William Bouwsma, and apparently 'stoical' moments are contrasted vividly with 'Augustinian' passages which emphasise 'medieval' conceptions of sin and the importance of faith and grace.³⁶

The contention that the *Secretum* is a work which suffers from the eclectic use of discordant traditions has been given particular credence by the efforts made by Francisco Rico and Hans Baron to reconsider the date of its composition.³⁷ Although their approaches differ in a number of respects, particularly with regard to the identification of textual parallels and autobiographical details, Rico and Baron both recognised the limitations imposed by the absence of earlier manuscript drafts and endeavoured to uncover compositional layers of the dialogue by identifying variations of style and argumentation. Particularly sensitive to supposed contradictions between Petrarch's use of specific sources, they saw the ambient tone of the text as reflective of an early enthusiasm for St. Augustine's *De vera religione*, and identified two clearly-defined passages in the first book as being reflective of uniquely 'Stoic' views.³⁸ Using the *Familiars* and the *Canzoniere* as a point of comparison, it was suggested that these two passages were inserted into the original 1347 draft under the influence of Cicero's letters and treatises in around 1353, by which time the *De vera religione* was held to have lost its appeal.³⁹ In contrast to a broadly 'Augustinian' view of the attainment of virtue – involving a *meditatio mortis* – Baron and Rico believed

³⁵ C. Calcatetta, 'La concezione storica del Petrarca,' *Annali della Cattedra Petrarcesca* 9 (1939-40): 1-26; idem, *Nella selva del Petrarca* (Bologna, 1942), 1-18; 418ff; see also Baron, *From Petrarch to Leonardo Bruni*, 25, 41; A. S. Bernardo, *Petrarch, Laura and the Triumphs* (Albany, 1974), 6-8; U. Bosco, 'Gli studi di Carlo Calcaterra sul Petrarca,' *Studi petrarcheschi* 5 (1952): 5-13, esp. 10-11.

³⁶ K. Heitmann, *Fortuna und Virtus: Eine Studie zu Petrarcas Lebensweisheit* (Köln and Graz, 1957) *passim*; C. Trinkaus, *In Our Image and Likeness: Humanity and Divinity in Italian Humanist Thought*, 2 vols., (London, 1970), 1:17ff; *The Poet as Philosopher*, 27-51; W. J. Bouwsma, 'The Two Faces of Renaissance Humanism: Stoicism and Augustinianism in Renaissance Thought,' in H. A. Oberman and T. A. Brady Jr., *Itinerarium Italicum: The Profile of the Italian Renaissance in the Mirror of its European Transformations. Dedicated to Paul Oskar Kristeller on the Occasion of his 70th Birthday*, (Leiden, 1975), 3-61.

³⁷ Baron, *Petrarch's Secretum*; Rico, *Vida u obra*. Baron, *Petrarch's Secretum* represents a significant shift away from his earlier position and should be read alongside H. Baron, 'Petrarch's *Secretum*: Was It Revised – and Why? The Draft of 1342-43 and the Later Changes,' *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 25 (1963):489-530, reprinted in a revised form in Baron, *From Petrarch to Leonardo Bruni*, 51-101.

³⁸ Baron, *Petrarch's Secretum*, 19-46; Rico, *Vida u obra*, 456-79.

³⁹ Baron, *Petrarch's Secretum*, 202-8; Rico, *Vida u obra*, 113-4; F. Rico, 'Petrarca y el *De vera religione*,' *Italia Medioevale e Umanistica* 17 (1974): 313-64, esp. 350-52.

that these passages presented Franciscus' 'conflict of cares' as a 'perturbation of mind' which could be overcome through the development of a 'correct will' and the application of reason in the pursuit of self-knowledge.⁴⁰

The revised dating proposed by Rico and Baron has not met with universal approval and many reviewers expressed concern about the validity of assigning the text to a later period on the basis of parallels drawn with works which are themselves difficult – if not impossible – to date.⁴¹ Viewing the chronology of Petrarch's intellectual development rather differently, Enrico Fenzi, Bortolo Martinelli and Giovanni Ponte offered a staunch defence of the dating of the *Secretum* to 1342-3 and rejected a number of the biographical claims intrinsic to Baron and Rico's case.⁴² Despite disagreement over the dating of the text, however, the underlying methodology of both those who advocate the 1347-53 dating and the 1342-3 dating remains identical.⁴³ Critics and supporters of Baron and Rico alike appear not to dispute that the text displays some evidence of 'Stoical' and 'Augustinian' moments in tension, and the problem of identifying the date of Petrarch's transition from one mode of thought to another partly fuels the continuing debate over its composition.

Even accounting for disagreements over dating, it must be granted that there is much to support the contention that Petrarch did not manage to settle on a single resolution to the tension between *voluptas* and *virtus*, and was induced into equivocation by apparent contradictions between divergent intellectual traditions. His first eclogue, written between 1346 and 1348, suggests an uncertainty over whether to admire classical poetry – represented by Homer and Virgil – or the Davidic psalms more.⁴⁴ In the explanatory letter which he later sent to his brother Gherardo, Petrarch argued that this was primarily a stylistic

⁴⁰ See Baron's helpful summary of this position; Baron, *Petrarch's Secretum*, 45-6.

⁴¹ On Rico, *Vita u obra*, see reviews by F. Bruni, *Medioevo romanzo* 3 (1976): 144-52; G. Martellotti, *Annali della Scuola Normale di Pisa*, Classe di lettere e filosofia, 3rd ser. 6/4 (1976): 1394-1401; D. Phillips, *Italica* 54/2 (Summer 1977): 300-6; G. Ponte, *Rassegna della letteratura italiana* 81 (1977): 442-5; A. D. Scaglione, *Romance Philology* 30 (1977-8): 116-9; K. Foster, *Modern Language Review* 73 (1978): 442-4. On Baron, *Petrarch's Secretum*, see reviews by F. E. Cranz, *Renaissance Quarterly* 39/4 (Winter 1986): 731-2; U. Dotti, *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana* 164 (1987): 120-5; G. Holmes, *English Historical Review* 103 (1988): 480-1; N. Mann, *Modern Language Review* 83 (1988): 751-2; B. Martinelli, *Speculum* 62/3 (July 1987): 644-8; M. Palumbo, *Medioevo romanzo* 11 (1986): 456-61; C. Trinkaus, *AHR* 91 (June 1986): 695-6.

⁴² E. Fenzi, 'Dall' Africa al *Secretum*' in G. Billanovich and G. Frasso, eds., *Il Petrarca ad Arquà. Atti del Convegno di Studi nel VI Centenario (1370-1374)*, (Padua, 1975), 61-115; B. Martinelli, *Il "Secretum" conteso* (Naples, 1982); idem, 'Sulla data del *Secretum* del Petrarca: Nova et vetera,' *Critica letteraria* 13 (1985): 431-82, 645-93; G. Ponte, 'Nella selva del Petrarca: La discussa data del *Secretum*,' *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana* 167 (1990): 1-63. Note also F. Rico, 'Sobre la cronología del *Secretum*: Las viejas leyendas y el fantasma Nuevo de un lapsus bíblico,' *Studi petrarcheschi* n.s. 1 (1984): 51-102.

⁴³ C. Kallendorf, 'The Historical Petrarch,' *AHR* 101/1 (Feb. 1996): 130-41, here 137-8; Trinkaus, Review of *Petrarch's Secretum*, 696.

⁴⁴ *Eclogue* 1; text, ed. E. Bianchi, *Rime*, 808-17; Baron, *Petrarch's Secretum*, 220.

consideration, but this may also have had an influence on the texts to which Petrarch turned for conceptual inspiration in letters to his friends.⁴⁵ Although he was initially drawn to the moral theology of St. Augustine, Petrarch's enthusiasm for the *De vera religione* appears to have waned by the time he wrote the first book of the *Familiars*. More and more, he found himself turning to classical texts: approving quotations from Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations*, the *De finibus* and the *De natura deorum* appear with mounting frequency in his letters. This apparent transition can accord with either dating of the *Secretum*. For Baron and Rico, the high-watermark of Petrarch's enthusiasm for the *De vera religione* was reached in 1347 and, following Giuseppe Billanovich's dating of the first book of the *Familiars*, the renewed influence of classical thought began to be felt by the early 1350s.⁴⁶ The *De vera religione*, however, had been known to Petrarch since about 1335, and Bortolo Martinelli has suggested that at least the letters to Tomasso da Messina should be dated to 1339-41, allowing for a subsequent period of uncertainty and ambivalence.⁴⁷

Despite this conscious turning towards classical exemplars, however, Petrarch remained doubtful about its implications. It is plain in the *Secretum* that he was grappling with a perceived tension between the pursuit of literary fame, which he saw as being compatible with his affection for the pagan classics, and his spiritual health. Similarly, in attempting to explain the allegorical meaning of *Ecl.* 1, Petrarch's defensive tone and strategy are themselves underwritten by an acceptance that questions might be raised about the moral value of both reading and imitating classical texts. In the opening lines of the letter, he acknowledges that Gherardo might feel that the poetry which looks to Homer and Virgil for inspiration is opposed to theology and the health of the soul, and despite justifying their compatibility, there is a sense in which he too shares the same concern.⁴⁸

Yet if Petrarch was experiencing something of a 'crisis' while he was composing the *Secretum*, it is perhaps too easy not only to overstate any apparent contradictions between his sources of inspiration, but also to ignore his capacity to have produced a logically coherent text while drawing on a variety of different sources. If he was indeed tormented by tensions between his admiration for Cicero – for example – and the moral theology of St. Augustine, it is unnecessary to assume that this emerged out of an antagonism between two monolithic bodies of thought.⁴⁹ Although Petrarch did recognise the Stoics – known to him primarily

⁴⁵ *Fam.* X, 4, 28-32.

⁴⁶ Baron, *Petrarch's Secretum*, 5-6, 218-23; Rico, *Vida u obra*, 51-6, 532-5; Rico, 'Petrarca y el *De vera religione*'; G. Billanovich, *Petrarca Letterato. I. Lo scrittoio del Petrarca* (Rome, 1947), 20, 47-55.

⁴⁷ Baron, *Petrarch's Secretum*, 6; Martinelli, Review of *Petrarch's Secretum*, 646, 648.

⁴⁸ *Fam.* X, 4, 1.

⁴⁹ Bouwsma, 'The Two Faces of Renaissance Humanism,' *passim*.

through Cicero and Seneca – and St. Augustine as authors of distinct philosophical systems, it is important to bear in mind that he had a subtle understanding of their relationship and was aware of the possibility of reconciling these two apparently divergent strands of thought within a discourse of faith and reason proposed by St. Augustine himself.

Although in later life St. Augustine advocated a fideistic theology which stressed the importance of grace, he had earlier been preoccupied with the problem of synthesising his burgeoning Christian beliefs with his admiration for classical philosophy, particularly the ‘Academic’ Stoicism of Cicero’s *Hortensius*.⁵⁰ In a series of works composed during the last two decades of the fourth century – the *Soliloquies*, the *De immortalitate animae*, the *De vera religione* and the *De libero arbitrio* – he used the problem of temptation as an opportunity to ‘transpose much inherited Stoicism into a form of [Christian] Platonism,’ as John Rist has put it.⁵¹ Espousing views in these works which he later came to revoke or qualify, Augustine attempted to adapt Cicero’s understanding of *voluntas* such that it became a form of orientation, and strove to reinvent his sceptical understanding of *sapientia* in such a way that it would admit the possibility of attaining to an absolute truth through the application of reason in the context of faith.

During the fourteenth century, it is possible to identify ‘a revival of Augustine which may well lay claim to the much abused designation Renaissance.’⁵² Under the influence of figures such as Thomas Bradwardine and Gregory of Rimini, St. Augustine’s works received increasing attention as sources for the relationship between faith and reason, and as precedents for the use of classical quotations in theological discussion.⁵³ Petrarch himself was acquainted with a number of prominent Augustinian canons and had direct contact with the ‘Augustinian Renaissance’.⁵⁴ In addition to commending the work warmly, he provided an introduction to the *Milleloquium Divi Augustini*, which was compiled by Bishop

⁵⁰ See, for example, P. Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, new ed., (London, 2000), 69-120; G. Bonner, *St. Augustine of Hippo: Life and Controversies*, 3rd ed., (Norwich, 2002), 57-103; J. J. O’Meara, *The Young Augustine: An Introduction to the Confessions of St. Augustine* (London and New York, 1980), 173-209. For the development of Augustine’s attitude towards the *Hortensius*, see H. Hagendahl, *Augustine and the Latin Classics*, 2 vols., (Göteborg, 1967), 2:486-97. For the influence of Cicero’s works on the young Augustine, see M. Testard, *Saint Augustin et Cicéron*, 2 vols., (Paris, 1958), 1:131-78.

⁵¹ J. Rist, ‘Faith and Reason,’ in E. Stump and N. Kretzmann, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine* (Cambridge 2001), 26-39, here 33.

⁵² H. A. Oberman, ‘Fourteenth-Century Religious Thought: A Premature Profile,’ *Speculum* 53/1 (Jan. 1978): 80-93, here 86.

⁵³ Oberman, ‘Fourteenth-Century Religious Thought,’ 86-9; B. Smalley, *English Friars and Antiquity in the Early Fourteenth Century* (Oxford, 1960); G. Leff, *Bradwardine and the Pelagians: A Study of his “De Causa Dei” and its Opponents* (Cambridge, 1958); idem, *Gregory of Rimini: Tradition and Innovation in the Fourteenth Century* (Manchester, 1961); H. A. Oberman, *Archbishop Thomas Bradwardine, A Fourteenth-Century Augustinian: A Study of His Theology in its Historical Context* (Utrecht, 1958).

⁵⁴ U. Mariani, *Il Petrarca e gli Agostiniani*, Edizioni di storia e letteratura, (Rome, 1956).

Bartolomeo of Urbino and which contained over 15,000 references to Augustine's works arranged under more than a thousand headings.⁵⁵ Of more telling importance, however, is the fact that Petrarch was familiar with Augustine's efforts to integrate Stoicism into the framework of Christian Neoplatonism. As well as having read the *Confessions* and observed the important role played by Cicero's *Hortensius* in the saint's path to conversion,⁵⁶ he was well acquainted with at least two of Augustine's most important works of synthesis from the late fourth century. His knowledge of the *De vera religione* has already been mentioned, but he was also sufficiently impressed by the *Soliloquies* to include it alongside the *Confessions* and the *De civitate Dei* on his list of his favourite books, which Berthold Ullman has dated to 1333-1343,⁵⁷ and to quote from it directly on a number of occasions between the 1330s and late 1350s.⁵⁸

Having read these texts before he began the *Secretum*, Petrarch also acknowledged them as an intellectual bridge between the Stoicism he knew from the works of Cicero and Seneca, and Christian moral theology. In a letter written to Giacomo Colonna on 21st December 1336, Petrarch rebutted the insinuation that he had read Augustine only with a 'certain simulated goodwill' and remained wedded to the work of classical philosophers.⁵⁹ In mounting his defence, Petrarch pointed out that Cicero's *Hortensius* had helped Augustine to turn towards the one truth.⁶⁰ As a consequence, Petrarch went on to ask Giacomo how it was possible to see either Plato or Cicero as obstructions to the one truth when they each pointed the way towards it.⁶¹ Writing over thirty years later, Petrarch left no doubt that he was a Christian above all else, and read the works of Cicero – for example – as a moral source only insofar as they could be viewed as compatible with his faith. Using Augustine as his authority once again, Petrarch claimed that had they lived only a little later, both Cicero and Plato would certainly have been Christians.⁶²

Despite the interpretations which have followed from attempts to identify compositional layers in the text, therefore, there are grounds to treat the suggestion that the *Secretum* made eclectic use of divergent traditions with some caution, and to regard the two 'stoical' passages identified in the first book by Baron and Rico with scepticism. Instead of

⁵⁵ *Fam.* VIII, 6.

⁵⁶ q.v. Augustine, *Confessiones*, V, v-vii; III, iv.

⁵⁷ Ullman, *Studies in the Italian Renaissance*, 117-37.

⁵⁸ *Fam.* III, 13, 1; X, 3, 36; XXI, 10, 12; *Invective contra medicum*, III, 126.

⁵⁹ *Fam.* II, 9, 8: 'Dicis me, non modo vulgus insulsum, sed celum ipsum fictionibus tentare; itaque Augustinum et eius libros simulata quadam benivolentia complexum, re autem vera a poetis et philosophis non avelli.'

⁶⁰ *Fam.* II, 9, 10-11; c.f. Augustine, *Confessiones*, III, iv.

⁶¹ *Fam.* II, 9, 12.

⁶² *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, V, 128; Marsh, 332. c.f. Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, VIII, v, 11; X, 2; XI, iv-vi; *De vera religione*, iii, 3; iv, 7.

there being a breach between Petrarch's use of classical and patristic texts, his familiarity with the *Soliloquies* and the *De vera religione* would have permitted a much more flexible and dynamic approach. Viewed not as representative of a monolithic body of theology in tension with ancient thought, but as a bridge between Stoic philosophy and classical literature on the one hand, and Christian Neoplatonism on the other hand, the *Soliloquies* and the *De vera religione* offered Petrarch the opportunity to marry a rationalistic search for truth with faith and grace while allowing him a relatively free literary rein. Recognising that St. Augustine had been an avid reader of Cicero, and approving of the Christian moral theology which developed out of that reading, Petrarch had a precedent for the selective use of classical texts in the *Secretum*. Quotation did not necessarily mean philosophical affinity any more than imitation meant reproduction.⁶³ Had Petrarch had the *Soliloquies* and the *De vera religione* in mind while composing the *Secretum*, it would have been perfectly legitimate for him to have mined Cicero's dialogues and Seneca's letters – for example – for gnomic quotations and ancillary support while remaining true to St. Augustine's moral theology.⁶⁴

3. Understanding Franciscus' 'illness': *voluntas*, cognition and the *meditatio mortis*

The first of Rico and Baron's 'stoical' passages occurs at the beginning of the first book of the *Secretum*. As we have already seen, in attempting to guide Franciscus away from his misery and towards virtue, Augustinus' first task was to uncover the underlying psychological reason for his slothful attachment to the temporal. Having been introduced by Lady Truth, Augustinus begins somewhat obliquely by asking Franciscus whether he has forgotten the fact of his own mortality, for, he explains,

nothing may be found more efficacious for spurning the allurements of this life and for composing the mind among the innumerable tempests of the world than a recollection of one's misery and a constant contemplation of death.⁶⁵

Although Franciscus claims never to forget his mortality, Augustinus doubts his sincerity and suspects that he is one of the many who persist in deceiving themselves and insist on ignoring the perils to which they are exposed. The role of the will is central to the

⁶³ On imitation, see M. L. McLaughlin, *Literary Imitation in the Italian Renaissance. The Theory and Practice of Literary Imitation From Dante to Bembo* (Oxford, 1995), 22-49.

⁶⁴ c.f. C. E. Quillen, *Rereading the Renaissance: Petrarch, Augustine and the Language of Humanism* (Ann Arbor, 1998), 187; K. Heitmann, 'Augustinus Lehre in Petrarca's *Secretum*,' *Bibliothèque d'humanisme et renaissance* 22 (1960): 34-53, here 35.

⁶⁵ *Secretum*, I: '... cum sit profecto verissimum ad contemnendas vite huius illecebras componendumque inter tot mundi procellas animum nichil efficacius reperiri quam memoriam proprie miserie et meditationem mortis assiduam...' *Prose*, 28.

development of this line of argument. Using the analogy of sickness and health, Augustinus shows that if a person recognises his unhappiness, he would naturally wish to rid himself of that misery. As a result of this desire, he would earnestly strive to shed his unhappiness and, as a consequence of this effort, would inevitably have his wish satisfied.⁶⁶ Although Franciscus agrees that a man who had recognised his unhappiness would want to be happy, he objects that many people are nevertheless unhappy against their will. Augustinus corrects him and states that since only virtue can make a man happy, it follows that only vice can make a man unhappy.⁶⁷ As Franciscus allows himself to be persuaded, the conversation turns once again to the *meditatio mortis*.⁶⁸

In his study of the *Secretum*, Baron followed Rico in suggesting that the manner in which Petrarch handled the 'desire to be happy' was reflective of an absorption of the Stoic doctrine of the will.⁶⁹ As Bouwsma, Trinkaus and Foster have argued, in stating that no man can be unhappy against his will, Augustinus appears to present Franciscus' attachment to the world as a 'perturbation of the mind', evoking the Stoicism which Petrarch would have encountered through Cicero and Seneca.⁷⁰ As such, the treatment of *voluntas* does not appear to fit comfortably with the surrounding instances of the Christian and 'medieval' *meditatio mortis* theme, and could best be explained as a later insertion into the text.

This interpretation is certainly not unconvincing. Petrarch was well acquainted with several sources which describe the Stoic doctrine of the will and which would have been attractive texts for emulation. In the *Tusculan Disputations* and the *De finibus*, for example, Cicero outlined the Stoic view that happiness could only come from virtue⁷¹ and affirmed that virtue could only be attained by consenting to the good and by withholding consent from the bad.⁷² In his letters, Seneca frequently wrote that it was incorrect to believe that corporeal pleasures were good and similarly incorrect to believe that physical suffering was bad.⁷³ A correctly ordered soul declined to consent to these errant beliefs and instead consented to temperance in the face of pleasure, or fortitude in the face of pain.⁷⁴

From Petrarch's perspective, Cicero illustrates this point particularly well in his critique of Torquatus' Epicurean belief that pain and pleasure corresponded to happiness and

⁶⁶ *Secretum*, I; *Prose*, 28-30.

⁶⁷ *Secretum*, I; *Prose*, 30.

⁶⁸ *Secretum*, I; *Prose*, 34.

⁶⁹ Baron, *Petrarch's Secretum*, 41; Rico, *Vida u obra*, 459.

⁷⁰ Bouwsma, 'The Two Faces of Renaissance Humanism,' 30; Trinkaus, *In Our Image and Likeness*, 1:7; K. Foster, *Petrarch. Poet and Humanist* (Edinburgh, 1984), 165.

⁷¹ e.g. Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations*, V, xii, 35-6; c.f. Seneca, *Ep.* xcii.

⁷² e.g. Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations*, II, xiii, 30-3; c.f. Seneca, *Ep.* lxvi.

⁷³ e.g. Seneca, *Ep.* lix, lxxi, lxxx.

⁷⁴ e.g. Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations*, IV, xxxviii, 83; also III, xvii, 36.

misery in the *De finibus*. Here, Cicero considers Epicurus' statement that, were he being burnt to death, he would exclaim 'How delightful this is!' In denying the existence of his physical suffering, Epicurus is presented as having believed that he would overcome the possibility of unhappiness.⁷⁵ Cicero, however, contends that in refusing to recognise the existence of the flames, Epicurus would not have avoided misery at all. The distress of being burnt, he explained, does not lie in the pain of the fire itself, but in the willingness to withhold consent from the urge to give in to the effects of the flames, and the refusal to turn to courage.⁷⁶ Here, it is the will which determines whether a man submits himself to the effects of certain stimuli or allows himself to assume the mantle of the good.

Having encountered these views, it would not have been implausible for Petrarch to have inserted them into a later draft of the *Secretum*. Had Petrarch indeed drawn inspiration from Stoic thought, we should read the opening pages of the dialogue as an explanation of Franciscus' need to develop a 'correct will'. Since he submits himself willingly to earthly experiences – and, as Seneca explained, thereby willingly made himself susceptible to the whim of fortune⁷⁷ – he must, if he desires happiness, decline to consent to the effects of an unstable world and will only the good. Read in this way, the passage would seem to outline a reasonable remedy for Franciscus' condition, but would stand in contrast to the *meditatio mortis* theme. Although Cicero, quoting Plato, declared that the life of the philosopher is a preparation for death,⁷⁸ the emphasis on the corruptibility of the body integral to Petrarch's treatment of the *meditatio mortis* is entirely absent.⁷⁹

Although a 'stoical' reading of this passage is not unreasonable, however, it is not a completely satisfying interpretation. As well as relying on a poor view of Petrarch's compositional skills, such a reading seems to fit uneasily with a close examination of Augustinus' actual words. Discussing Franciscus' appreciation of his misery, he asks whether anyone 'has so lost track of sense that, having been gripped by a deadly illness, he would not ardently desire health.'⁸⁰ Franciscus agrees that no-one who was really sick would not desire health, and this prompts Augustinus to ask a further question. 'Do you think,' he presses, 'that there is anyone so lazy and remiss of spirit that he would not strive with all his

⁷⁵ Cicero, *De finibus*, II, xxvii, 88-9; see M. C. Stokes, 'Cicero on Epicurean Pleasures,' in J. G. F. Powell, ed., *Cicero the Philosopher: Twelve Papers* (Oxford, 1995), 145-70.

⁷⁶ Cicero, *De finibus*, II, xxix, 94-5.

⁷⁷ Seneca, *Ep.* lxxiv, 2-4.

⁷⁸ Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations*, I, xxx, 74, quoting Plato, *Phaedo*, 67D.

⁷⁹ *Secretum*, I; *Prose*, 54-8.

⁸⁰ *Secretum*, I: 'Putas ne quempiam adeo delirare, ut morbo ancipiti correptus non summe cupiat sanitatem?' *Prose*, 28.

zeal after that which he desired with all his mind?’⁸¹ Franciscus agrees that there is no-one so indolent. Augustinus then leads him to a crucial conclusion:

Just as someone who comes to recognise that he is miserable from deep and intense meditation desires not to be miserable, and as someone who has begun to hope for this strives for it, so he who has striven for this is also able to achieve it. For it is clear that the third of these can only be impeded by a defect in the second, just as the second can be impeded only by a defect in the first; so it is correct that the root of human well-being is in the first.⁸²

Whereas Baron, Rico and others have interpreted this as a statement of the importance of the ‘desire not to be miserable’, Augustinus clearly indicates that Franciscus’ error is not one of will, but of cognition. Since he does not recognise his illness, he cannot desire to be well or strive for health and hence cannot rid himself of his sickness. A few paragraphs later, Augustinus revisits the same point and asks Franciscus whether he recalls ‘that a perfect understanding of our own miseries produces a perfect longing to rise from them.’⁸³ Explaining further, he states that Franciscus never really wanted to be happy because his mind remained unmoved.⁸⁴ This stands in stark contrast to the form of Academic Stoicism propounded by Cicero and Seneca. Omitting to propose any necessary connection between cognition and will, Cicero and Seneca leave open the possibility that a person could recognise the cause of his misery and yet decline to consent to the virtue which he knew would lead to happiness.

If it is unlikely for this passage to have been the outcome of an absorption of Stoic ethics, other texts present themselves as plausible sources. The first pages of the *Secretum* seem to have many parallels with the opening of Boethius’ *Consolatio Philosophiae* and Augustine’s *Soliloquies*, and – in addition to their apparently autobiographical nature – these texts appear to recall the appearance of Lady Truth, the nature of Franciscus’ illness and Augustinus’ diagnosis of his error in Petrarch’s dialogue. In the *Soliloquies*, the character Augustinus has been thinking about the nature of the good in solitude for some time when the mysterious figure of Ratio appears to him.⁸⁵ Under questioning, Augustinus admits that

⁸¹ *Secretum*, I: ‘Putas ne quempiam fore tam pigri remissique animi ut non, quod tota mente desiderat, omni studio consecetur?’ *Prose*, 28.

⁸² *Secretum*, I: ‘Ut, sicut qui se miserum alta et fixa meditatione cognoverit cupiat esse non miser, et qui id optare ceperit sectetur, sic et qui id sectatus fuerit, possit etiam adipisci. Enimvero tertium huiusmodi sicut nonnisi ex secundi, sic secundum nonnisi ex primi defectu prepediri posse compertum est; ita primum illud ceu radix humane salutis subsistat oportet.’ *Prose*, 28-30.

⁸³ *Secretum*, I: ‘Recognoscis ne igitur veram illam fuisse sententiam grandevumque progressum, ut miseriarum suarum perfecta cognitio perfectum desiderium pariat assurgendi? Desiderium potentia consequitur.’ *Prose*, 42-44.

⁸⁴ *Secretum*, I, quoting Virgil, *Aen.* IV, 449; *Prose*, 42. Compare the similar use of the same quotation in the context of a rejection of Stoic ethics at Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, ix, 4.

⁸⁵ Augustine, *Soliloquies*, I, i, 1.

he is disturbed by 'the fear of loss of those I love, the fear of suffering and the fear of death.'⁸⁶ Using a form of dialogue quite different from that employed by Cicero, but similar to that in the *Secretum*, Ratio points out that Augustinus' sadness is the result of his being unduly attached to the world,⁸⁷ and proceeds to guide his soul toward God through cognitive change. In the *Consolatio Philosophiae*, which may have been partly modelled on the *Soliloquies*,⁸⁸ Boethius' character is again sitting alone meditating in a glade when Lady Philosophy appears and attempts to dispel his misery.⁸⁹ As in the *Soliloquies*, Boethius' 'vision is clouded by mortal shadows, he is held fast by earthly longings, and he is tossed by passion.'⁹⁰ Lady Philosophy consoles him and endeavours to free him from the assaults of fortune.

It is, however, Augustine's early works – the *Soliloquies* and the *De vera religione* – which, as conscious adaptations of Stoic thought, recommend themselves most strongly as potential sources for Petrarch's argument in the first pages of the *Secretum*.⁹¹ From his reading of the *De vera religione*, Petrarch was well acquainted with Augustine's approbation of the Stoic view that happiness could only come from virtue⁹² and with his affirmation that virtue and vice were the result of will.⁹³ In contrast to the Stoics, however, St. Augustine viewed *voluntas* not as a variety of consent, but as a form of orientation that was rooted in cognition. Virtue was, indeed, a matter of *voluntas*, but only in that virtue was the outcome of an orientation of the self towards God. By the same token, sin was the outcome of an orientation towards the world.⁹⁴

⁸⁶ *ibid.*, I, ix, 19: 'Sed modo videor mihi tribus tantum rebus posse commoveri: metu amissionis eorum hominum quos diligo, metu doloris, metu mortis.'

⁸⁷ *ibid.*, I, x, 17ff.

⁸⁸ E. T. Silk, 'Boethius's *Consolatio Philosophiae* as a Sequel to Augustine's *Dialogues* and *Soliloquia*,' *Harvard Theological Review* 32/1 (Jan. 1939): 19-39.

⁸⁹ Boethius, *De consolatio philosophiae*, I pr 1.

⁹⁰ Silk, 'Boethius's *Consolatio Philosophiae* as a Sequel,' 36.

⁹¹ Although the reference is somewhat fleeting, it is tempting to suggest that Petrarch wished to present Franciscus as repeating St. Augustine's own solitary struggles. *Secretum*, proem.: '... et, nisi te presens forte felicitas miseriarum tuarum fecit immemorem, multa tu, dum corporeo carcere clauderis, huic similia pertulisti.' *Prose*, 24. For a very brief discussion of Petrarch's knowledge of the *Soliloquies*, although not with reference to the *Secretum*, see P. P. Gerosa, *Umanesimo cristiano del Petrarca. Influenza Agostiniana attinenze medievali* (Turin, 1966), 101-2.

⁹² Augustine, *De vera religione*, xxiii, 44.

⁹³ *ibid.*, xiv, 27; c.f. Augustine, *De libero arbitrio*, I, xiii, 96; *De civitate Dei*, ix, 4; xi, 17.

⁹⁴ Even in later years, Augustine persisted in this view, expressing orientation most frequently as love of self or love of God. Indeed, the idea of orientation ultimately provided the foundation for Augustine's notion of the 'two cities'. See, for example, Bonner, *St. Augustine*, 312-93; G. Bonner, 'Augustine and Pelagianism,' *Augustinian Studies* 23 (1992): 33-51 and 24 (1993): 27-47; J. Wetzell, 'Snares of the Truth: Augustine on Free Will and Predestination,' in R. Dodaro and G. Lawless, eds., *Augustine and His Critics: Essays in Honour of Gerald Bonner* (London, 2002), 124-41.

In the *De vera religione*, St. Augustine explained that a man could turn his orientation towards God by coming to understand the truth about God and the soul.⁹⁵ From Scripture, he argued, it is evident that God provided the human soul with the capacity to redeem itself and to merit a blessed life after death.⁹⁶ Although a full comprehension of this truth would lead a man to love God and the good, his understanding could be impeded by a reliance on the senses.⁹⁷ In the *Soliloquies*, this question was examined from the perspective of a philosophical enquiry into the nature of *veritas* and reveals a critical reliance on the distinction between the mortal and the eternal.⁹⁸

Having explained that he would like to know about God and the good, Augustinus is told that since he is seeking the truth, he must first understand what the word 'truth' itself connotes if he is ever to desire it.⁹⁹ In this, Ratio distinguishes between 'truth' and 'true'. The nature of a corporeal object can be described as 'true' in that one can speak of a 'true' tree.¹⁰⁰ This quality of being true is, however, bound up with existence and terminates with death. Yet in order to speak of 'truth' as something which exists in itself, it must exist distinct from the existence of corporeal things. As Ratio explains, 'truth' persists after the death of a true corporeality in the same way that chastity exists after a chaste person dies.¹⁰¹ Consequently,

Truth is therefore not in mortal things. Truth does, however, exist and is somewhere. There are, therefore, immortal things. Nothing however is true in which there is no truth. It follows that only immortal things are true.¹⁰²

The argument is somewhat abstract, but the syllogism is relatively simple. The truth which Augustinus is searching for is absolute and eternal. Nothing of this absolute truth could be found in mortal things whose existence is fleeting. Since anything that is not the truth is false, all mortal things are falsehoods. The implication is clear. If a man wished to change his orientation by coming to know the truth about God and the soul, he must first come to realise that the truth he seeks cannot be found in the mortal. Any mortal pleasure must be avoided in the pursuit of *veritas*. He must recognise that anything that will die is the antithesis of

⁹⁵ Augustine, *De vera religione*, xxiv, 45.

⁹⁶ *ibid.*, xiv, 27-xvii, 34.

⁹⁷ *ibid.*, xxxii, 59-xxxiv, 64.

⁹⁸ It is worth noting that Augustine wrote the *Soliloquies* to counter the scepticism of the New Academy, on which see, for example, G. O'Daly, 'The response to scepticism and the mechanisms of cognition,' in Stump and Kretzmann, eds., *Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, 159-70.

⁹⁹ Augustine, *Soliloquies*, I, xv, 27.

¹⁰⁰ *ibid.*, I, xv, 28.

¹⁰¹ *ibid.*

¹⁰² *ibid.*, I, xv, 29: 'Non igitur est veritas in rebus mortalibus. Est autem veritas et non est nusquam. Sunt igitur res immortales. Nihil autem verum, in quo veritas non est. Conficitur non esse vera nisi quae sunt immortalia.'

everything he seeks. The allurements of the physical world perceptible to the body must therefore be spurned as the first step in the pursuit of truth.¹⁰³ Truth, as Ratio goes on to explain, can be found only within the immortal soul itself.

Had Petrarch drawn inspiration from the *De vera religione* and the *Soliloquies*, a quite different interpretation of our passage emerges. Where Franciscus' condition is viewed as a crisis of orientation, Augustinus' contention that no-one is unhappy against his will serves to highlight the fact that Franciscus does not recognise his 'illness'. If, as he claimed after the initial statement of the *meditatio mortis*, Franciscus really did meditate on death, he would know that true happiness could only be found in the eternal and would as a consequence aspire to virtue and desire the *vera felicitas*. Augustinus' connection of will and happiness illustrates that Franciscus cannot fully understand the implications of human mortality. This digression, stimulated by Franciscus' self-deception, is a necessary development of the initial statement of the *meditatio mortis* and logically leads on to a more detailed explanation of the same theme. In the same way as in the *De vera religione* the desire for happiness is bound up with a recognition of the fallacy of looking to the mortal world. A reading of this passage which views Petrarch's apparent classicising tendencies as part of a strategy derived from St. Augustine's early works, therefore, not only generates a coherent view of Petrarch's opening treatment of virtue and happiness, but also gives weight to the reference to 'recognition' that is ignored in a 'stoical' reading.

4. Parallels: the world, the truth and *voluntas* in the *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia* and the *Invective contra medicum*

Although it is possible to read Rico and Baron's first 'stoical' passage as a treatment of the role of cognition in moral reorientation in imitation of the early works of St. Augustine, one of Petrarch's most frequently quoted texts has been used to suggest it was the will, and not the mind which was of primary significance. In the fourth book of the *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, Petrarch attempted to rebut the Aristotelian claims of his Venetian friends by using Aristotle's own philosophy. Petrarch begins by affirming that Aristotle failed to achieve his own objective. 'I have often complained to myself and with others,' he wrote,

that what is announced by the philosopher in the first book of the *Ethics* is not fulfilled, that is to say that we study this branch of philosophy not so that we may know, but so that we may become good.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ *ibid.*, I, xiv, 24.

Petrarch does not deny that Aristotle defines the good admirably, but he points out that the knowledge that the philosopher imparts does not ‘urge the mind towards love of virtue and hatred of vice.’¹⁰⁵ It is, after all, one thing to know and another one to love or to will,¹⁰⁶ ‘but it is preferable [*satius*] to will the good than to know the truth.’¹⁰⁷

This passage can be examined from a variety of different perspectives and there will be cause to return to its implications in a later chapter, but for scholars such as Trinkaus and Seigel, Petrarch appears to criticise Aristotle’s approach to moral philosophy because it lacks the stirring exhortations and grand style that would otherwise inspire the reader to love and will the good.¹⁰⁸ Seeing rhetoric as intimately related to the will, Trinkaus reads the assertion ‘*Satius est autem bonum velle quam verum nosse*’ as an affirmation of the primacy of *voluntas* in determining virtue.¹⁰⁹

Although the passage may seem to imply that Aristotle’s failure is rhetorical, Petrarch’s objection is actually related to the ends for which knowledge is sought. If knowledge of the good is sought for its own sake, Petrarch suggests, its value is limited. It is only where this knowledge is sought for the sake of loving the good that it becomes worthwhile. ‘What is the use,’ he asks, ‘of knowing what virtue is, if that knowledge does not make us love it?’¹¹⁰ Aristotle’s error lay in pursuing knowledge without understanding its proper end, not merely in explaining the nature of the good inadequately.

The importance of distinguishing between knowledge for its own sake and knowledge for the sake of loving the good is explained in greater detail in the following paragraphs. ‘Those who spend their time,’ Petrarch writes a little later,

in knowing virtue rather than attaining it err greatly, and [those who spend their time] in learning about rather than in loving God err most of all. For while it is

¹⁰⁴ *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, IV, 107: ‘Et sepe mecum et quandoque cum aliis questus sum illud rebus non impleri, quod in primo Ethicorum philosophus idem ipse prefatus est, eam scilicet philosophie partem disci, non ut sciamus, sed ut boni fiamus.’ Marsh, 314.

¹⁰⁵ *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, IV, 107-8: ‘Video nempe virtutem ab illo egregie diffiniri et distingui tractarique acriter, et que cuique sunt propria, seu vitio, seu virtuti... Docet ille, non infitior, quid est virtus; at stimulos ac verborum faces, quibus ad amorem virtutis vitique odium mens urgetur atque incenditur, lectio illa vel non habet, vel paucissimos habet.’ Marsh, 314.

¹⁰⁶ *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, IV, 108; Marsh, 314.

¹⁰⁷ *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, IV, 111: ‘Satius est autem bonum velle quam verum nosse.’ Marsh, 318.

¹⁰⁸ Trinkaus, *Poet as Philosopher*, 107-111; J. E. Seigel, *Rhetoric and Philosophy in Renaissance Humanism: The Union of Eloquence and Wisdom, Petrarch to Valla* (Princeton, 1968), 40-1.

¹⁰⁹ Trinkaus, *Poet as Philosopher*, 107.

¹¹⁰ *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, IV, 108: ‘Quid profuerit autem nosse quid est virtus, si cognita non ametur?’ Marsh, 314.

possible for no-one to know God entirely in this life, it is possible to love Him piously and ardently...¹¹¹

While this appears to reprise Academic Scepticism, it is in fact a statement of God's unfathomable nature familiar to St. Augustine's moral theology.¹¹² Petrarch's intention is not to limit the value of knowledge, but rather to criticise the man who sought knowledge of God and virtue out of intellectual pride. Man is, after all, capable of knowing *something* about virtue and *something* about God. What matters is the end for which it is sought. It is impossible, Petrarch argues, to love the unknown, but it is enough

to know God and virtue no more than is granted, so that we may know Him to be the most radiant, most judicious, most kind and inexhaustible fount of all good, by whom and through whom and in whom we are as good as we are, and know also that virtue is the best thing after God.¹¹³

Once a man knows this, then he shall love God, and love virtue for God's sake with his whole heart and being.¹¹⁴

As a result, Petrarch's assertion that 'it is preferable (*satius*) to will the good than to know the truth' appears to be misleading. It is not that Petrarch advocated prioritising *voluntas* over knowledge in the pursuit of virtue, but rather that the distinction between the two serves to highlight the importance of the proper end of knowledge. Where knowledge is sought for its own sake it will bring him neither virtue nor happiness. Where knowledge is sought for the sake of loving what is known, a man will come to love God and virtue fully. Knowledge, in other words, precedes *voluntas*.

This connection between knowledge and *voluntas* is repeated and expanded in the fourth book of the *Invective contra medicum*, which was compiled out of a series of earlier letters in 1355.¹¹⁵ Here, Petrarch not only equates understanding with orientation, but also develops his discussion of knowledge to explain the opposition between the mortal and the eternal in a manner which provides a further parallel to the argument in the first pages of the *Secretum*.

¹¹¹ *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, IV, 111: 'Itaque longe errant qui in cognoscenda virtute, non in adipiscenda, et multo maxime qui in cognoscendo, non amando Deo tempus ponunt. Nam et cognosci ad plenum Deus in hac vita nullo potest modo, amari autem potest pie atque ardentem...' Marsh, 318.

¹¹² e.g. Augustine, *Sermones*, 113.3.5; *De Genesi ad litteram*, 12.31.59.

¹¹³ *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, IV, 111: 'Et quanquam prorsus incognita non amentur, satis est tamen Deum eatenus, quibus ultra non datur, ac virtutem nosse, ut sciamus illum omnis boni fontem lucidissimum, sapidissimum, amenissimum, inexhaustum, a quo et per quem et in quo sumus quicquid sumus boni, hanc post Deum rerum optimam.' Marsh, 318.

¹¹⁴ *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, IV, 111; Marsh, 318.

¹¹⁵ E. H. Wilkins, *Life of Petrarch* (Chicago, 1961), 123-4; U. Dotti, *Vita di Petrarca* (Bari, 1987), 252-7.

In rebutting papal physician's accusations, Petrarch explained that 'within the soul is that which makes one happy and miserable.' The man who would be happy, he continued, should divest his soul of worldliness before turning it towards itself and God.¹¹⁶ Referring directly to the *De vera religione*, Petrarch pointed out that

Plato's observation, which Augustine cited and praised, is widely recognised as true. To cite his very words, 'We seek the truth not with the body's eyes, but with a pure mind. When the soul clings to the truth, it becomes blessed and perfect; and nothing hinders our perception of the truth more than a life devoted to sensual desires.'¹¹⁷

The turning of the soul towards itself and God is connected with the search for the truth which resides within. The perception of the truth, however, is inhibited by a reliance on the bodily senses which apprehend only the mortal.

Together, these passages from the *Invective contra medicum* and the *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia* seem to reinforce the view that Petrarch – consciously evoking the work of the young St. Augustine – perceived a direct connection between knowledge and *voluntas*, and recognised that the apprehension of truth was impeded by the bodily senses. In the context of the *Secretum*, this adds weight to the suggestion that Augustinus identifies Franciscus' 'illness' as a problem of orientation stemming from a cognitive failure which is itself caused by the effects of his dependence on the mortal world.

5. Becoming virtuous: the *meditatio mortis*, self-knowledge and the role of reason.

Insofar as Petrarch's conception of virtue is concerned, an early-Augustinian reading of Baron and Rico's first 'Stoic' passage serves to illustrate that the first step on Franciscus' path was a full recognition of the corruptibility of the corporeal. Once he had apprehended that mortal things were antithetical to his comprehension of the good, it remained for him to turn to the eternal, as Lady Truth had suggested in the poem.¹¹⁸ The question of how Franciscus could turn towards the heavenly is the issue which the second of Baron and Rico's 'Stoic' passages concerns.

¹¹⁶ *Invective contra medicum*, IV, 174-5: 'Intus in anima est quod felicem et quod miserum facit ... Constat autem nunquam melius esse anime quam dum, amotis obstaculis viteque compedibus, in Deum atque in se ipsam libera tandem et expedita convertitur.' Marsh, 148.

¹¹⁷ *Invective contra medicum*, IV, 175: 'Illud quoque platonicum, ab Augustino relatum et laudatum, notissime verum est: 'Non corporeis oculis,' ut verba etiam ipsa ponem, "sed pura mente veritatem videri. Cui cum anima inheserit, eam beatam fieri atque perfectam; ad quam percipiendam nichil magis impedire quam vitam libidinibus deditam.'" Marsh, 148, trans. Marsh, 149; quoting Augustine, *De vera religione*, iii, 3, citing Plato, *Phaedo* 80D-81E.

¹¹⁸ See note 33, above.

Immediately following a paragraph restating the *meditatio mortis*, this passage begins with a thinly-veiled attack on dialecticians. As in the fourth book of the *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*,¹¹⁹ Petrarch has Augustinus attack those who define human nature ‘in all the schools’ but who fail to live in accordance with the nature they claim to understand.¹²⁰ ‘You will not find any shepherd,’ he says, ‘who is so untutored that he does not know that a man is an animal, indeed, the first of all animals, or, again, anyone who denies that man is an animal both rational and mortal.’¹²¹ Although this point is well known, there are few people who take it to heart. If they did, they would know and live according to their own nature, and so become virtuous. ‘If you see a man,’ he says,

whose reason is so strong that he organises his life as he follows it, that he subordinates his desire to himself alone, that he reins in the impulses of his mind with its bridle, and that he understands both that he is only distinguished from the savagery of brute animals through it and also that unless he lives by reason, he does not deserve the name of man; who beyond this is so conscious of his own mortality that he has it before his eyes each day, governs himself through it, and, contemptuous of these mortal things, aspires to that life where, made much greater by reason, he ceases to be mortal – this person, you may say, possesses true and useful knowledge about the definition of man.¹²²

This passage is critical for an understanding of the mechanism by which a man who had spurned the temporal could embrace virtue fully. It is, however, lacking both in rigour and detail.

For Rico and Baron, this passage is best understood as another ‘Stoic’ interlude. Pointing to the emphasis on the *meditatio mortis* theme in the surrounding paragraphs, Baron suggests that the attack on dialecticians and the ‘glorification of reason’ comes at ‘quite an unlikely spot’.¹²³ The dialogue makes perfect sense, in Baron’s view, when the passage is removed and he therefore contends that the ‘glorification’ of man’s rational nature was introduced into an earlier draft of the *Secretum*.¹²⁴ Baron’s point is broadly reflective of

¹¹⁹ *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, IV, 48-9.

¹²⁰ *Secretum*, I: ‘Ista quidem dyaleticorum garrulitas nullum finem habitura, et diffinitionem huiusmodi compendiis scatet et immortalium litigorum materia gloriatur: plerunque autem, quid ipsum vere sit loquuntur, ignorant.’ *Prose*, 52.

¹²¹ *Secretum*, I: ‘Hominem quidem esse animal, imo vero animalium principem cunctorum, nemo tam durus pastor invenietur ut nesciat; nemo rursus, si interrogetur, aut rationale animal aut mortale negaverit.’ *Prose*, 52.

¹²² *Secretum*, I: ‘Siquidem videris adeo ratione pollentem ut secundum eam vitam suam institerit, ut sibi soli subiecerit appetitus, ut illius freno motus animi coherceat, ut intelligat se se per illam tantum a brutorum animantium feritate distingui, nec nisi quatenus ratione degit nomen hoc ipsum hominis mereri; adeo preterea mortalitatis sue conscius, ut eam cotidie ante oculos habeat, per eam se ipsum temperet, et hec peritura despiciens ad illam vitam suspiret, ubi, ratione suprauctus, desinet esse mortalis; hunc tandem veram de diffinitione hominis atque utilem scientiam habere dicito.’ *Prose*, 52-4.

¹²³ Baron, *Petrarch’s Secretum*, 38-9.

¹²⁴ *ibid.*, 40-1.

general historical opinion. For Bouwsma, the 'sovereignty of reason' suggested by this passage is a manifestation of the Stoics' attribution of a 'divine spark, identified with reason' to mankind.¹²⁵ In Foster's study, it is the role played by this 'divine spark' in combating the desires that 'the wise man cannot help feeling' that reflects the influence of Stoicism.¹²⁶ In the same vein, Trinkaus has argued that the emphasis on truth to a rational nature as the key to a self-directed existence can be seen as a revival of the 'ideal of Cicero and Seneca'.¹²⁷

This interpretation is certainly not unjust. In the *De officiis* alone Petrarch would have encountered the view that reason differentiates mankind from animals. Unlike a beast, which is moved by the senses alone, a man

because he is endowed with reason, by which he comprehends the chain of consequences, perceives the causes of things, understands the relation of cause to effect and of effect to cause, draws analogies, and connects and associates the present and the future – easily surveys the course of his whole life and makes the necessary preparations for its conduct.¹²⁸

Reason allows man to apprehend his soul's place within the concatenation of nature and to judge what is proper in life.¹²⁹ For Cicero, as well as for Seneca, right reason allows man to comprehend virtue.¹³⁰

Reason, moreover, underpinned Cicero's recommendation of self-knowledge as the key to the transcendence of mortality. In the rebuttal of Torquatus' Epicurean claims, the Delphic injunction to know oneself is identified with the application of reason to human existence.¹³¹ The man who is 'occupied day and night' in this enterprise will eventually recognise that his soul is 'not limited to this short span of life' and will not merely cease to worry about death, but will also effectively transcend his mortality.¹³²

The role played by reason in Stoic moral philosophy has a parallel in Petrarch's treatment of reason in the *Secretum*. When the exact wording of the passage is examined more closely, however, there are some significant problems with a purely 'Stoic' interpretation. Throughout the passage, Petrarch emphasises that man is not only rational, but also mortal, and sketches the relationship between these two components. Although the wording is awkward, Petrarch argues that while it is reason which distinguishes man from the 'savagery of brute animals', the shift in the direction of argument before *adeo* suggests

¹²⁵ Bouwsma, 'The Two Faces of Renaissance Humanism', 10, 19.

¹²⁶ Foster, *Petrarch: Poet and Humanist*, 165.

¹²⁷ Trinkaus, *The Poet as Philosopher*, 134; see also 56.

¹²⁸ Cicero, *De officiis*, I, iv, 11; trans. W. Miller (Cambridge MA, 1913). See also Cicero, *De finibus*, I, xxx, 107.

¹²⁹ Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations*, I, xvii, 40-xxiii, 55.

¹³⁰ Cicero, *De officiis*, I, vi, 18; *Tusculan Disputations*, IV, xv, 34; Seneca, *Ep.* lxvi, 10-12.

¹³¹ Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations*, II, v, 16; V, xvi, 44.

¹³² *ibid.*, V, xxv, 70.

that it is the contemplation of mortality – and not reason – which allows self-governance and permits him to temper himself.¹³³ This impression is swiftly confirmed in the text. Immediately following ‘*per [mortalitatem] se ipsum temperet*’, Petrarch deploys the phrase ‘*et hec peritura despiciens ad illam vitam suspiret, ubi, ratione superauctus, desinet esse mortalis.*’ Despite the cumbersome construction, this suggests that the contemplation of mortality is prior to the desire to live according to reason.¹³⁴

It is difficult to find any Stoic precedent for such a line of argument. Nowhere in the works of Cicero and Seneca may we find any similar treatment of mortality. Although it was a matter of concern for both, they consistently strove to devalue death and never advocated the continued contemplation of mortality which Augustine recommends in the *Secretum*. If anything, Cicero and Seneca presented reason as being prior to the banishment of fears of death and often advised friends to cease worrying about their demise. In the *Tusculan Disputations*, Cicero improvised on a Stoic theme in suggesting that, since the soul is immortal, death should be met with equanimity.¹³⁵ Developing this further, he contended that rational contemplation could lead a man to feel a ‘union with the divine mind’ and cease to think himself ‘limited to this short span of life’.¹³⁶

It is perhaps a little too easy to overstress the significance of this problem, particularly given the awkwardness of Petrarch’s phraseology, but it is important to point out that, despite its appeal, the identification of this passage as having been drawn from Stoic sources is open to question. As with the first allegedly ‘Stoic’ passage, however, an alternative heuristic device may be derived from the *De vera religione* and the *Soliloquies*.

In the *De vera religione*, St. Augustine borrowed from Stoic texts in affirming that reason was the faculty which distinguished man from the animals.¹³⁷ Granted to humankind by God, reason allowed man to apprehend the light of truth shining from within his soul, and is hence closely connected with self-knowledge. In the *Soliloquies*, Ratio explains that God, like the soul, can be understood through the exercise of reason.¹³⁸ Although God illuminates himself, reason allows man to ‘see’ Him¹³⁹ and the self to be reoriented accordingly.¹⁴⁰

¹³³ *Secretum*, I; *Prose*, 52. Although *eam* could be substituted for either *rationem* or *mortalitatem*, the semi-colon which precedes *adeo* in the Carrara edition, and the word order suggest that the latter is the more plausible.

¹³⁴ *Secretum*, I; *Prose*, 52. The sub-clause ‘*ratione superauctus*’ seems to dispel doubt. Were it *ratio* which allowed a person to govern himself, to despise mortal things, and to aspire to the state where he would no longer be mortal, it would seem unnecessary for Petrarch to have included this clause.

¹³⁵ Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations*, I, xlix, 117-9.

¹³⁶ *ibid.*, V, xxv, 70.

¹³⁷ Augustine, *De vera religione*, xxix, 53. c.f. Augustine, *De Trinitate*, 12.1.1-12.2.2; *Soliloquies*, I, ii, 7.

¹³⁸ Augustine, *Soliloquies*, I, iv, 8.

¹³⁹ *ibid.*, I, vi, 12. c.f. Augustine, *De vera religione*, xxiv, 45; xxix, 52.

In keeping with his understanding of the nature of truth, however, St. Augustine argued that reason could be inhibited by corporeal desires. Having established that truth is immortal in the *De immortalitate animae*, Ratio demonstrates that the soul contains ‘truth’ within itself as a form of reason.¹⁴¹ The soul, however, does not possess reason except as a natural ‘memory’ which can be recalled or forgotten.¹⁴² The soul can remember truth by turning towards reason, but may jeopardise or even lose its awareness of the truth in succumbing to corporeal phenomena or in fostering worldly sentiments.¹⁴³

If his soul is to recover the ‘memory’ of truth within itself, therefore, it was necessary for a person to forsake mortal things and to embrace reason instead. Elsewhere in his works, Augustine expressed this as a need to seek the *sapientia* accessible to the intellect rather than the *scientia* accessible through the senses.¹⁴⁴ As he explained in the *Soliloquies*, however, a person could only use reason to see the light of God within himself once he had understood the nature of truth and desired it earnestly. As we have already seen, this was contingent on his first having apprehended that truth could be found not in the mortal, but only in the eternal. If reason is to operate uninhibited, therefore, a meditation on mortality and truth is first necessary to quell *voluptas* and to produce a mind unmoved by corporeal desires. In direct contrast to the Stoics, it was not reason which stilled the heart’s desires, but the contemplation of mortality. Indeed, at the beginning of the third book of the *Secretum*, Augustinus uses Terence’s words to suggest that reason could not be used to control Franciscus’ irrational desire for love and glory.¹⁴⁵ Only once desire had been excised through a meditation on death could reason act to uncover the inner truth of the soul, and thus bind the desires of the body. In the second book of the dialogue, Petrarch used Virgil in the manner of Fulgentius to illustrate St. Augustine’s contention that once the *meditatio mortis* has excised *voluptas* the mind may keep desire at bay thenceforth.¹⁴⁶

Insofar as Petrarch recognised that man is a rational animal, St. Augustine’s early works would have been an equally valid point of references as Seneca or Cicero. In that they presented the consciousness of mortality as working hand-in-hand with the exercise of reason, however, the *De vera religione* and the *Soliloquies* are much more likely sources of inspiration for the second ‘Stoic’ passage identified by Rico and Baron. It cannot, of course,

¹⁴⁰ Augustine, *Soliloquies*, I, vi, 3.

¹⁴¹ Augustine, *De immortalitate animae*, 1-2, 10-11.

¹⁴² Augustine, *De Trinitate*, 10.11.17-10.12.19. See G. O’Daly, *Augustine’s Philosophy of Mind* (London, 1987), 189-99.

¹⁴³ Augustine, *De immortalitate animae*, 6-7.

¹⁴⁴ Augustine, *De Trinitate*, 12.14.21-12.15.25.

¹⁴⁵ *Secretum*, III; *Prose*, 160, quoting Terence, *Eunuchus*, 61-3; 56; 57-8.

¹⁴⁶ Note the allegorical treatment of Aeolus and the winds: *Secretum*, II; *Prose*, 122-4; referring to Virgil, *Aeneid*, I, 52-7. c.f. Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, ix, 4.

be said that Petrarch conveyed any of the subtleties of Augustine's early treatment of reason, but he may still be seen to have participated in the spirit of its heritage and the second 'Stoic' passage may be interpreted as conveying adequately the general implications of the epistemological arguments of the *Soliloquies* and the *De vera religione*. Like St. Augustine, Petrarch's discussion of the means by which a man may become virtuous begins with a recognition of corporeal mortality. Keeping the fact of his death before him at all times, a man may not only 'govern himself' and become 'contemptuous of mortal things', but will also aspire to 'that life where, made much greater by reason, he ceases to be mortal.' Freed of the burden of *voluptas*, reason allows a man to merit salvation for his soul, that part of himself which will not be subject to death or decay.

6. Breaking the 'adamantine chains', the reception of grace and the function of prayer

It would not be inaccurate to say that the 'philosophical' arguments of the first book of the *Secretum* concentrate on the examination of the self. In the second and third books, Franciscus' all-too-human failings and *accidia* are considered more closely, and the theological issues of grace and prayer are frequently raised. For Trinkaus, the relationship between rational self-examination and grace was reflective of what he terms 'the tradition of the double consciousness'. In *The Poet as Philosopher*, Trinkaus argues that

'[f]or Petrarch, the transformation of the self had to come from divine mercy, by grace alone, but first there had to be a mind that knew its errors and the self-deceptions of its affective attachments to alluring but destructive ways of existence. Insight concerning the self was not enough ... but insight concerning the self was a needed preliminary to the possibility of grace.¹⁴⁷

As Franciscus' will was 'both insufficient and divided', he could never completely heal his soul even with the most intense meditation: only grace, Trinkaus suggests, could save him.¹⁴⁸ Drawing a parallel with the later works of St. Augustine, Trinkaus emphasises that 'Petrarch shared the view that man's salvation came by grace alone'.¹⁴⁹ In this respect, Petrarch is held to have foreshadowed certain elements of Reformation theology: pointing to Petrarch's treatment of despair in the *De otio religioso*, addressed to the Carthusian monastery at Montrieux, Trinkaus asks 'was it not also within the fold of the Augustinian Hermits that Brother Martin Luther first experienced his sense of despair and divine hatred that led him to

¹⁴⁷ Trinkaus, *The Poet as Philosopher*, 48.

¹⁴⁸ *ibid.*, 86.

¹⁴⁹ *ibid.*, 111; Trinkaus, *In Our Image and Likeness*, 1:28-41.

his subjective theology of *sola fide*?¹⁵⁰ On the basis of what is perceived to be a common belief in justification by grace alone, Trinkaus concludes that Petrarch's religious proximity to Luther was 'amazing'.¹⁵¹

Trinkaus' argument is in some ways attractive. The image of man as continually tortured by the ambivalence of his will, and dependent always on the grace of God for release, corresponds well to the idea of Petrarch as a poet who indulged the conflict of his own unresolved cares. It is, however, difficult to sustain Trinkaus' suggestion that Petrarch advocated salvation by grace alone in anticipation of Luther's reforming theology. The teleological approach explicit in this comparison is itself open to question, but in the present context, it is of greater concern that Trinkaus' interpretation of Petrarch's theology of grace rests on the assumption not merely that Franciscus had an irreconcilably divided will, but also that there was a fissure between Ciceronian reason and a monolithic 'Augustinianism' in the *Secretum*.

In that it is an examination of his moral condition, the *Secretum* is predicated on Franciscus' inability to raise himself from his misery. This is not, however, to say that Franciscus is by his very nature unable to transform himself. In the final moments of the dialogue, Franciscus thanks Augustinus for his guidance and resolves to keep the importance of the *meditatio mortis* in mind.¹⁵² Suddenly wavering, however, he then says that he is unable to restrain his desires.¹⁵³ 'We're returning to our old debate,' Augustinus replies, 'you say that your will is impotent. But let it be so, since it can't be otherwise, and I pray God that He will accompany you and allow you to reach safety, wherever you wander.'¹⁵⁴ In this last exchange, Franciscus experiences a crisis of confidence in the strength of his will. Far from acceding that this is indicative of a permanent failure, however, Augustinus' response returns attention to the very beginning of the dialogue and reminds Franciscus that the solution to his dilemma lies first with a meditation on death. God willing, Franciscus will indeed redeem himself.

Augustinus' appeal to God to allow Franciscus to redeem himself in this passage is important in that it seems to hint at the operation of the *meditatio mortis* and reason in the

¹⁵⁰ C. Trinkaus, 'The Religious Thought of the Italian Humanists, and the Reformers: Anticipation or Autonomy?' in C. Trinkaus and H. A. Oberman, eds., *The Pursuit of Holiness in Late Medieval and Renaissance Religion. Papers from the University of Michigan Conference*, (Leiden, 1974), 339-66, here 349.

¹⁵¹ *ibid.*

¹⁵² *Secretum*, III; *Prose*, 212-4.

¹⁵³ *Secretum*, III; *Prose*, 214.

¹⁵⁴ *Secretum*, III: 'In antiquam litem relabimur, voluntatem impotentiam vocas. Sed sic eat, quando aliter esse non potest, supplexque Deum oro ut euntem comitetur, gressusque licet vagos, in tutum iubeat pervenire.' *Prose*, 214.

context of grace. Further light is shone on the relationship between Augustinus' moral programme and God's benevolence in the second book, shortly before Franciscus' *accidia* is discussed. At the beginning of the second day, Augustinus reminds Franciscus that his pride and arrogance have prevented him from knowing his own nature and virtue.¹⁵⁵ Yet, even if Franciscus' strengths were as great as he believed, Augustinus cautions, this should be cause for humility rather than pride, considering that he acquired it not by his own merits, but by the grace of God.¹⁵⁶ This is not to say that Franciscus could not have these strengths as an autonomous individual capable of redeeming himself, but rather that such abilities as he has exist only within the context of grace. So, as Augustinus explains a little later, if a man is chaste, his chastity comes from God even though he might have struggled to overcome his urges.¹⁵⁷ Indeed, it is in overcoming his desires that a man both receives and evidences God's grace. The individual's endeavour works in co-operation with the undeserved grace of God, as Franciscus himself seems to indicate.¹⁵⁸ At the beginning of the third day's discussion, the need for active participation in the work of grace is highlighted explicitly. Reviewing the 'adamantine chains' which bind Franciscus and prevent him from reflecting on his own mortality, Augustinus says that just as the blood of a goat is necessary to shatter adamant, so the blood of Christ has been provided to soften the hardened cares with which he is tormented.¹⁵⁹ Although Christ's blood can penetrate even the hardest heart, however, assent is needed for it to operate. Since Franciscus has not been healed by the blood of Christ, Augustinus can only presume that he has not assented to its effects.¹⁶⁰ As 'assent' is identifiable with orientation, and orientation with cognition, it is possible to see that in order for grace to operate, Franciscus must co-operate with its action through a continuous meditation on death and the rational pursuit of self-knowledge.

Rather than there being an implicit tension between Ciceronian reason and an 'Augustinian' theology of grace as Trinkaus has argued, the co-operation of grace and endeavour which Petrarch describes corresponds to the interplay between faith and understanding in St. Augustine's early works. Although in his later writings St. Augustine downplayed the role of human effort and placed greater emphasis on grace as the precondition of salvation, his earlier works demonstrate a more flexible approach which reflect his youthful attempts to reconcile classical philosophy and Christian theology. In the

¹⁵⁵ *Secretum*, II; *Prose*, 70.

¹⁵⁶ *Secretum*, II; *Prose*, 70-2.

¹⁵⁷ *Secretum*, II; *Prose*, 100-2; alluding to *Wisd.* 8:21; Augustine, *Confessiones*, VI, xi, 19-20.

¹⁵⁸ *Secretum*, II; *Prose*, 100.

¹⁵⁹ *Secretum*, III; *Prose*, 130; c.f. Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, XXXVII, iv, 59; Isidore, *Etymologies*, XII, i, 14; XVI, xiii, 2.

¹⁶⁰ *Secretum*, III; *Prose*, 130.

De vera religione, Augustine stressed that although mankind had fallen by its his own volition, by God's grace it could return to God.¹⁶¹ By using the reason with which God had endowed him, a man could turn himself away from the temporal and towards the truth.¹⁶² His capacity to do so was predicated on God's divine mercy and would, by extension, also merit the reception of grace.¹⁶³

The role of prayer in the *Secretum* further demonstrates the compatibility of faith and individual endeavour, and Petrarch's debt to St. Augustine's early works. There are, of course, numerous instances of prayers being offered in the course of the dialogue, but a particularly revealing explanation of the importance of prayer itself occurs on the third day. While Franciscus is calling to mind the mortality of his body and trying to quash his desires, Augustinus advises him also to 'weary the ears of the Ethereal King with devout prayer.' Indeed

no day, no night should pass without tears and solemn appeals, if – having taken pity – the Omnipotent One is to put an end to such troubles. You must take care to do these things; and if you observe them carefully, divine help will come and, as I hope, the invincible Saviour will with his right hand give succour.¹⁶⁴

Although, as with the direct references to grace, this could be read as a statement of the limitations of Franciscus' abilities, it may more meaningfully be seen as an extension of Petrarch's debt to St. Augustine's early interpretation of the interplay of faith and understanding. The *Soliloquies* itself begins with a heartfelt prayer in which Augustinus begs to be received as he rushes towards God.¹⁶⁵ In the same manner as Franciscus in the *Secretum*, Augustinus asks for strength.¹⁶⁶ In this respect, Augustinus' prayer in the *Soliloquies* appears almost as a private recapitulation of what is already known and a revision of what is sought. This, indeed, is precisely how St. Augustine defined prayer in the *De magistro*. 'In prayer,' he wrote, 'we cannot hold that God needs to be taught or reminded, so that when we use words we do so to remind ourselves or to admonish and teach others.'¹⁶⁷ As such, the act of prayer to God has the effect of consolidating the devotee's commitment to that which is sought. Understandably, St. Augustine associated prayer with the rational

¹⁶¹ Augustine, *De vera religione*, xi, 21-xii, 25.

¹⁶² *ibid.*, xxiii, 44-xxiv, 45.

¹⁶³ e.g. Augustine, *De diversibus quaestionibus*, ii, 2.

¹⁶⁴ *Secretum*, III: 'Inter hec celum devotis orationibus pulsandum; aures Regis etherei piis precibus fatigande. Nulla dies nulla nox sine lacrimosis obsecrationibus transigenda est, si forte miseratus Omnipotens finem laboribus tantis imponeret. Hec agenda tibi cavendaque sunt; que diligentius observanti aderit divinum auxilium, ut spero, et invicti Liberatoris dextra succurret.' *Prose*, 188.

¹⁶⁵ Augustine, *Soliloquies*, I, i, 5.

¹⁶⁶ *ibid.*, I, i, 6.

¹⁶⁷ Augustine, *De magistro*, vii, 19, trans. Burleigh, *Early Writings*, 83.

part of human nature. Again in the *De magistro*, he writes that ‘God is to be sought and prayed to in the secret place of the rational soul, which is called the “inner man”.’¹⁶⁸

Despite Trinkaus’ willingness to distinguish between Ciceronian reason and a monolithic ‘Augustinian’ theology, therefore, Petrarch’s understanding of prayer and grace can be seen as a coherent part of a moral philosophy developed under the influence of St. Augustine’s early works. Rather than being an indication of the limitations of his ability autonomously to spurn vice and embrace virtue, the fact that Franciscus prays for God’s help reflects the co-operative relationship between grace and rational self-transformation in the *Secretum*.

¹⁶⁸ Augustine, *De magistro*, i, 2; trans. Burleigh, *Early Writings*, 70.

All in the Mind: *Otium* in the *De otio religioso*

1. Living virtuously: Salutati's *De seculo et religione* and Petrarch's *De otio religioso*

Italian humanists of the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries claimed moral philosophy as the fifth of the *studia humanitatis* and, as Charles Trinkaus observed in 1964, much scholarship has been devoted to uncovering the various attempts to define concepts such as 'happiness', 'wisdom' and 'virtue'.¹ In propounding a notion of virtue derived from the moral theology of St. Augustine, but which reached out gnominically to the Latin classics, Petrarch participated actively in the humanist appropriation of moral philosophy in the *Secretum*, albeit in a distinctively Christian fashion. Yet the first humanists were not merely interested in the abstract: they were as deeply concerned with the identity of the virtuous life as they were with the nature of virtue itself. This question of how to conceive of the life of virtue was in many ways inherited from 'traditional medieval problems of ecclesiastical morality' and, overlapping with concepts of civic engagement, affected by aspects of mendicant thought.² It was, however, also influenced by the language and preoccupations which shaped classical treatment of terms such as *otium* and *solitudo*. Navigating the treacherous waters which both connected and divided texts from the classical, patristic and medieval traditions, figures including Coluccio Salutati, Lorenzo Valla and Ambrogio Traversari were interested in determining whether it was better to pursue a *vita activa* – an active civic life – or to pursue a *vita contemplativa* – a life of meditative withdrawal in which 'special sanctity [was] granted ... to members of religious orders.'³

Coluccio Salutati's *De seculo et religione*, written in about 1381, ranks among the most important humanist treatises on the relationship between the secular and religious

An early version of this chapter was presented to the Medieval European Research Seminar at the University of Manchester on 15th November 2007.

¹ C. Trinkaus, 'Humanist Treatises on the Status of the Religious: Petrarch, Salutati, Valla,' *Studies in the Renaissance* 11 (1964): 7-45, here 7.

² *ibid.*; H. Baron, 'Franciscan Poverty and Civic Wealth as Factors in the Rise of Humanistic Thought,' *Speculum* 13/1 (Jan. 1938): 1-37.

³ Trinkaus, 'Humanist Treatises,' 8.

lives.⁴ Although he later altered his position – most notably in a letter to Pellegrino Zambecari written on 23rd May 1398⁵ – Salutati's tract is a defence of the religious life which built on an assertion of the primacy of the will. Despite his role as Chancellor of the Florentine Republic, he distinguished sharply between the sinfulness of a life devoted to temporal pursuits and the virtue of a life given over to God. The distinction unmistakably evokes the spirit of St. Augustine's works, and it is perhaps not surprising that Salutati relied heavily on the *De civitate Dei*.⁶ As Trinkaus and Ronald Witt have pointed out, however, the distinction between the two modes of living is infused and, indeed, shaped by a notion of primitivism which is derived from, amongst others, Juvenal's *Satires*, Virgil's *Eclogues* and Boethius' *Consolatio Philosophiae*.⁷ In passages coursing with fervour, Salutati merges this with currents of traditional monastic thought and even aspects of mendicant theology.⁸ He urges men to

take away greed, depose riches, renounce the world, lead your life according to the precepts [of Scripture], attempt to fulfil the counsels, subdue your will to the divine will ... begin to love God, hate the world, love poverty, hate riches.⁹

The monastic way is the true way, and Salutati speaks admiringly of those who willingly submit themselves to harsh and difficult lives of religious discipline.

Salutati's *De seculo et religione* has frequently been compared to Petrarch's *De otio religioso* and the latter is usually read as having contrasted life in the world with the monastic life in a similar manner.¹⁰ Although Rodney Lokaj, for example, has viewed it as a more critical text,¹¹ most scholars have seen the *De otio religioso* as a celebration of the life of religious contemplation and as a humanistic appropriation of medieval monastic thought. For Paul Oskar Kristeller, 'Petrarch transformed the monastic ideal of solitude into a secular and literary ideal.'¹² The same view has been shared by Charles Trinkaus, who has argued that Petrarch's treatise presents 'the monastic life not so much as separated from the life of

⁴ Salutati, *De seculo et religione*, ed. B. L. Ullman (Florence, 1957); for a discussion of the treatise, see, for example, R. G. Witt, *Hercules at the Crossroads. The Life, Works, and Thought of Coluccio Salutati* (Durham N.C., 1983), 195-208.

⁵ Text in B. G. Kohl and R. Witt, eds., *The Earthly Republic: The Italian Humanists on Government and Society* (Philadelphia, 1978), 93-114. See Witt, *Hercules at the Crossroads*, 351-3.

⁶ Trinkaus, 'Humanist Treatises,' 23; R. Bonnell, 'An Early Humanistic View of the Active and Contemplative Life,' *Italica* 43 (Sept. 1966): 225-39.

⁷ Trinkaus, 'Humanist Treatises,' 21-2.

⁸ Baron, 'Franciscan Poverty', 16-7.

⁹ Quoted in Trinkaus, 'Humanist Treatises,' 24; for text, see Salutati, *De seculo et religione*, ed. Ullman, 81-2.

¹⁰ *De otio religioso*, ed. G. Rotondi, Studi e Testi 195, (Vatican City, 1958); hereafter this edition will be referred to as 'Rotondi'.

¹¹ R. J. Lokaj, 'Petrarch vs. Gherardo: a case of sibling rivalry inside and outside the cloister,' (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2001).

¹² P. O. Kristeller, *Eight Philosophers of the Renaissance* (Stanford, 1964), 14.

the worldly but as the safer and more fully religious way. He apparently felt no friction between his own way and that of the monks.¹³ Other scholars, however, have seen Petrarch's idealisation of monastic life as the counterpart of a more critical estimation of his own, secular life. Seidlmeyer, for example, has perceived a tension between Petrarch's own *otium* and that which he observed at Montrieux.¹⁴ Similarly, Giles Constable has suggested that the text cannot be understood except as the product of 'traditions going back many centuries in monastic history' and as an idealisation of cloistered leisure.¹⁵

That Petrarch began to write the *De otio religioso* after a short visit to the Carthusian monastery at Montrieux in January or early February 1347 seems to recommend the view that the text was conceived as a meditation on the religious life in the general manner of Salutati's *De seculo et religione*.¹⁶ Returning to his 'own solitude', Petrarch wrote that he came to reflect on the 'blessed sweetness' he had observed and, thanking his hosts, thought further on the religious leisure he had witnessed.¹⁷ The urge to compare his life with that of his brother always having been strong, Gherardo's circumstances at the monastery at Montrieux may indeed have provoked reflection on the relative merits of monastic and secular living, especially as Petrarch continued to be tormented by uncertainties over his literary endeavours and by his unrequited love for Laura while he was composing the text.¹⁸

While Salutati's *De seculo et religione* is a comparative work which recommends the monastic life as the sole solution to the problematic nature of the human condition, however, Petrarch's *De otio religioso* consciously uses the life of the religious merely as the framework for his discussion of *otium*. As Ronald Witt has observed, 'the *De otio religioso* is more properly a praise of the kind of withdrawal connected with the monastic life.'¹⁹ The treatise takes *otium* – and not monasticism *per se* – as its subject, and the text, while called forth by Petrarch's visit to Montrieux, considers a concept which inhabited an intellectual

¹³ Trinkaus, 'Humanist Treatises,' 18.

¹⁴ M. Seidlmeyer, 'Petrarca, das Urbild des Humanisten,' *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 40 (1958):141-93, here 149-50.

¹⁵ G. Constable, 'Petrarch and Monasticism,' in A. S. Bernardo, ed., *Francesco Petrarca: Citizen of the World. Proceedings of the World Petrarch Congress, Washington D.C., April 6-13 1974* (Padua and Albany, 1980), 53-100, here 64.

¹⁶ For the dating of the *De otio religioso*, see G. Rotondi, 'Le due redazioni del *De otio* del Petrarca,' *Aevum* 9 (1935): 27-77; idem, 'Note al *De otio religioso*,' *Studi petrarcheschi* 2 (1949):153-66; G. Martellotti, 'Nota critica al testo del *De otio religioso*,' in *Prose*, 1168-9; H. Cochin, *Le frère de Pétrarque et le Livre du Repos des Religieux* (Paris, 1903), 200-1.

¹⁷ *De otio religioso*, I, 1: 'Nunc tandem in solitudinem propriam regressus et totius sacre dulcedinis memor quam apud vos, dominice apes, bene nata gens, hausit eamque nunc ipse mecum in abscondito ruminans, multa reperio que ille michi perbrevis dies in longum profutura tribuerit.' Rotondi, 2, II.7-10.

¹⁸ Lokaj, 'Petrarch vs. Gherardo,' *passim*; Cochin, *Le frère de Pétrarque*, *passim*; c.f. *Fam.* IV, 1; X, 4.

¹⁹ Witt, *Hercules at the Crossroads*, 198-99; see also A. von Martin, *Coluccio Salutati und das humanistische Lebensideal* (Berlin, 1916), 78.

space he shared with the monastic community, and which implicitly bridged the gap which otherwise divided the religious and the secular.

Although Petrarch's view of the status of the religious is indeed important, it is not unjust to observe that very little attention has been given to the identity of *otium* itself in the *De otio religioso*. While it is prudent to pay close attention to the circumstances in which the tract was composed, and it is necessary to acknowledge that it contains much comment on the nature of monasticism, it is nevertheless striking that – with the exception of Brian Vickers' survey articles on the history of the concept from Antiquity to Renaissance²⁰ – scholars have been loath to give due attention to the fact that the *De otio religioso* was written primarily as a reflection on *otium*.

The reason for this omission is obscure, but it is not implausible to speculate that it may derive from a willingness to read Petrarch's work both through the lens of his original visit to Montrieux and in the context of later humanist debates about the status of the religious. Occasioned by contact with monastic life, and a point of reference for successive generations concerned with a tension between the secular and the religious, the text's perspective on monasticism has come to occlude its central engagement with *otium*.

2. Types of *otium*

Otium – or 'leisure' – is a concept which is not restricted to the *De otio religioso* and, indeed, recurs in many of Petrarch's works from the period between the early 1340s and the late 1360s. In each text, it appears as an integral part in the life of the man who would be virtuous.

In the first book of the *Rerum memorandarum libri*, written between early 1342 and September 1343, Petrarch distinguished between two types of *otium*.²¹ While the one was nothing more than idleness, hateful to all men and unworthy of commemoration, the other was 'not so much a hatred of the town as consisting in a love of literature and virtue.'²² Revisiting the same distinction some years later in the *De remediis utriusque fortune*,

²⁰ B. Vickers, 'Leisure and idleness in the Renaissance: the ambivalence of *otium*,' *Renaissance Studies* 4/1 (March 1990): 1-37 and 4/2 (June 1990): 107-154.

²¹ *Rerum memorandarum libri*, ed. G. Billanovich, Edizione nazionale delle opera di Francesco Petrarca, (Florence, 1945), I, 1-10; Wilkins, *The Making of the "Canzoniere"*, 347-60; Wilkins, *Life of Petrarch*, 38-943-4.

²² *Rerum mem.* I, 1, 2: 'Ceterum cum solitarii otii duo sint genera, illud sompno et inertie amicum quod quidam lucifuge sectantur, qui villis suis utuntur pro sepulcris et in illis se se infodiunt viventes, "nulla re alia quam otii" cognomine gloriosi, non literato tantum sed viro etiam obscenum, atque indignum commemoratione pretereo; alterum illud attingam non tam urbis odio quam literarum et virtutis amore constitutum, unde animo vel studiorum cupido vel ad ea nitenti de quibus proxime dicturus sum gratissima proveniunt alimenta...'

Petrarch described that *otium* which was enjoyed for its own sake as ‘inert, languid, accustomed to embrace rest, than which nothing is more foul, nothing more like the grave.’ The *otium* which was used properly, however, was ‘active, labouring even at rest, and busy around honest affairs, than which nothing is sweeter.’²³ In the face of Gaudium’s persistent objections, Ratio inveighs against inactive *otium* as prefiguring death, and as the gateway to the vices.²⁴ *Otium* should not, Ratio claims, be a matter of sleeping idly at a country farm, like the infamous Servilius Vatia, but of constant toil, working always towards the virtue which is the source of joy and quietness.²⁵

Petrarch’s description of the concept both in the *Rerum memorandarum libri* and the *De remediis utriusque fortune* places *otium* firmly between virtue and vice, and while the use of leisure for productive toil leads to true peace, the enjoyment of idleness brings only depravation and sorrow. In the *Secretum*, this distinction between the *otium otiosum* and the *otium negotiosum* is related specifically to Augustinus’ attempt to overcome Franciscus’ *accidia* and his susceptibility to the wiles of *fortuna*. *Otium*, properly employed, becomes a response to an inappropriate attachment to temporal things and a remedy for spiritual negligence.

Towards the end of the second book Franciscus complains about the grime and confusion of city life. He would, he claims, far rather live in the countryside.²⁶ Augustinus rebukes him for the stupidity of his wish. Conflating the quiet of the countryside with the genuine peace he sought, Augustinus suggests that he is shying away from the contradictions which raged in his soul. ‘If the internal tumult of your mind were stilled,’ Augustinus tells Franciscus, ‘the crashing din around you would still assail your senses, but, believe me, it would not move your mind.’²⁷ Indeed, Augustinus goes on to argue that flight from the city and removal to some more secluded rural setting could render him just as distant from the

²³ *De remediis utriusque fortune*, I, 21:

‘GAUDIUM: Otio fruor iucundissimo.

RATIO: “Utor” dic: nulla hic re fruendum sed utendum multis habet doctrina salubrior.

GAUDIUM: Delectabile otium est michi.

RATIO: Refert multum hoc ipsum otium quale sit: duas nempe species otii diffiniunt, operosi alteram atque ipsa in requie laborantis ac circa honesta studia solliciti, quo nil est dulcius, alteram inertis et languidi et solam requiem complexi, quo nil fedius, nil similis est sepulchro. De primo igitur sepe magna quedam opera, et mundo utilia et suis autoribus gloriosa, proveniunt, de secundo autem nichil unquam nisi inglorius torpor ac marcidus. Primum illud rite philosophantibus, hoc secundum pigris et ventri somnoque deditis peropportunitum, ubi nullo interpellante edant licenter ac dormiant.’

²⁴ *ibid.*

²⁵ *ibid.* referring to Seneca, *Ep.* lv, on which see Vickers, ‘Leisure and idleness’, 116, n.116; c.f. *De vita solitaria*, Z I, iii, 2; *P* I, iii; *Prose*, 324 where Petrarch misrepresents Seneca’s meaning. For further discussion of the treatment of this letter in the *De vita solitaria*, see the following chapter.

²⁶ *Secretum*, II; *Prose*, 120.

²⁷ *Secretum*, II: ‘Quod si unquam intestinus tumultus tue mentis conquiesceret, fragor iste circumtonans, michi crede, sensus quidem pulsaret, sed animum non moveret.’; *Prose*, 120.

attainment of happiness. Since he had not cut out the worldliness which renders him susceptible to the city's assaults upon his senses, the mere memory of the objects of his desires would, in seclusion, continue to make him miserable.²⁸ Explaining further, Augustinus tells Franciscus that

for the man who carries his illness around with him, a change of place increases his burden, and does not add to his health at all. It may be said to you without impropriety that to a certain young man who was complaining that travel had not brought him any benefit, Socrates replied 'You were travelling with yourself.' It is first necessary for your mind to be prepared by driving out that longstanding burden of cares; only then may you flee. For it has been discovered, not only for the body, but also for the mind, that a cure is inefficient unless the patient is well disposed towards it. Otherwise, you may reach the furthestmost reach of the Indies, and yet ever admit that Horace was right when he said 'those who hurry across the sea change only the sky, but not their mind.'²⁹

True *otium*, Petrarch indicates, is not dependent on surroundings, but on labouring towards personal spiritual health.

Examining Franciscus' *avaritia* elsewhere, Augustinus instigates a comparison between the *otium otiosum* and the *otium negotiosum* by contrasting the solace which Franciscus had enjoyed in the past with his present condition. Deliberately stressing the sense of contentment and peace, Augustinus asks him if he remembered lying down on 'the grassy couch of the meadows', drinking in 'the murmur of the writhing waters' as he looked down on the valley that was open before him.³⁰ At that time – probably before he first saw Laura – Franciscus had no regard for wealth or the trappings of the world, and yet 'in his mind was as wealthy as a king, and returning at night to his home, would load his table with unbought dainties.'³¹ Although he was *otiosus et solitarius*, Augustinus evokes Cicero's praise of Scipio Africanus in *De officiis* in pointing out that, unburdened by worldly desires,

²⁸ *Secretum*, III; *Prose*, 164.

²⁹ *Secretum*, III: 'Quia malum suum circumferenti locorum mutatio laborem cumulat, non tribuit sanitatem. Potest ergo tibi non improprie dici, quod adolescenti cuidam, qui peregrinationem nil sibi profuisse querebatur, respondit Socrates: "Tecum enim" inquit "peregrinabaris". Tibi quidem in primis sequestranda vetus hec curarum sarcina et preparandus est animus; tum denique fugiendum. Hoc enim non in corporibus modo sed in animis quoque compertum est; quod nisi in patiente disposito virtus est agentis inefficax. Alioquin ad extremos Indorum fines penetrare quidem poteris, semper Flaccum vera locutum fateberis, ubi ait: "celum non animum mutant, qui trans mare currunt."'; *Prose*, 164-6, quoting Horace, *Ep.*, I, 11, 27.

³⁰ *Secretum*, II: 'Meministi quanta cum voluptate reposto quondam rure vagabaris, et nunc herbosis pratorum thoris accubans murmur aque luctantis hauriebas, nunc apertis collibus residens subiectam planitiem libero metiebaris intuitu; nunc in aprice vallis umbraculo dulci sopore correptus optato silentio fruebaris...' *Prose*, 86.

³¹ *Secretum*, II: 'regum equabat opes animo, seraque revertens nocte domum, dapibus mensas onerabat inemptis'

Prose, 86, quoting Virgil, *Georgics*, IV, 130-1.

Franciscus was neither idle nor alone.³² Always Franciscus was thinking on some high matter and always he had the Muses for company: he longed for nothing else and was certainly contented.³³

This *otium negotiosum* is in stark contrast with that leisure which Franciscus currently pursued. Horrified to be accused of ambition a little later in the text, Franciscus attempts to counter Augustinus' charge by relating his abandonment of the city for the countryside. 'So it has profited me nothing,' he exclaims indignantly,

to have fled the city whenever possible, to have despised the mob and public affairs, to have sought out the refuge of the woods and the silent countryside, and to have expressed my hatred for puffed-up honours, now that I am accused of ambition!³⁴

Augustinus, however, is swift to correct his interlocutor's claim. The *otium*, solitude and *incuriositas ... rerum humanarum* which Franciscus professes to practice are not an emanation of his virtue, but a product of his desire for glory.³⁵ Insofar as he claims to be at leisure and spurn temporal things, he is merely expressing the persistence of his own inquietude and worldly longings for the sake of literary fame. Franciscus' *otium* is an *otium otiosum*, an idleness which manifests both the cause of his misery and the spiritual sloth which prevents him overcoming his sorrow.

The idea of an *otium negotiosum* as a productive leisure which stands opposed both to idle inaction and, more importantly, to the *accidia* which accompanies worldliness is repeated in the *Invective contra medicum*.³⁶ Shaped by his need to rebut the claims of the anonymous physician, Petrarch's treatment of *otium* in the *Invective* is influenced by a somewhat different rhetorical strategy. Rather than contrasting two different types of *otium* – as in the *Secretum* – Petrarch juxtaposes his leisure (an *otium negotiosum*) with the lifestyle recommended by the papal physician. Turning the doctor's Aristotelianism back on him, Petrarch's objective is not to demonstrate that *otium* relies on rustic seclusion, but rather to

³² *Secretum*, II; *Prose*, 86. Cicero, *De officiis*, III, i, 4. c.f. also Cicero, *Pro Plancio*, 66.

³³ In Ovid, *Tristia*, I, I, 39ff, *otium* (sc. *otiosum*) is described as the necessary precondition for the writing of poetry. Although in the *Canzoniere*, Petrarch appears to approve this view (q.v. *Canz.* 114, ll.5-6), in this passage of the *Secretum*, he seems to invert this view. The reference to the Muses indicates that it is the *absence* of desire intrinsic to the virtuous *otium negotiosum* which is the predicate of poetic composition.

³⁴ *Secretum*, II: 'Nichil ergo michi profuit urbes fugisse, dum licuit, populosque et actus publicos despexisse, silvarum recessus et silentia rura secutum odium ventosis honoribus indixisse: adhuc ambitionis insimulor!' *Prose*, 94.

³⁵ *Secretum*, II; *Prose*, 96.

³⁶ On the *Invective contra medicum*, see U. Bosco, 'Particolari petrarcheschi. I. Precisazioni sulle *Invective contra medicum*,' *Studi petrarcheschi* 1, (1948): 97-110; Wilkins, *Life of Petrarch*, 123-4; U. Dotti, *Vita di Petrarca*, (Rome, 1987), 252-7. Text in *Invectives*, ed. Marsh, 2-179.

show that *otium*, properly conceived, is opposed to the vices so clearly evident in the city, and is, in fact, a precondition of salvation.

At the outset of his argument, therefore, Petrarch openly accepted the philosopher's belief that man is by nature a political animal.³⁷ This, however, was not incompatible with solitary leisure: solitude, properly employed, need not harm the polity.³⁸ His solitude, he pointed out, had never had as its object the avoidance of humanity *per se*, but merely the avoidance of the vices of men.³⁹

To illustrate his point, Petrarch offered a satirical treatment of the 'goods' of city life.⁴⁰ In the city, one can find 'a brothel, a bath-house, a market, honey-wine, pastry, relish, and similar things.'⁴¹ While some men may revel in these 'goods', however, Petrarch argued that the solitary man finds his happiness only increased by their absence.⁴² Although rustic seclusion does indeed lack the pleasures of the vulgar crowds, Petrarch contended that it has its own delights which are of great use in the pursuit of salvation – *quies*, *libertas*, and *otium*.⁴³ St. Jerome is used as an example of a solitary man whose *felicitas* (not to mention his use to humanity) was augmented by his isolation from such things and his recommendation of 'Holy rusticity' is praised accordingly.⁴⁴ Expanding on this point a few paragraphs later, he wrote that

it is commonly agreed that there is nothing better for the soul than, with all of life's obstacles and shackles having been cast off, for it to be turned free and unfettered to God and to itself: to be sure, while we are on earth, that can happen nowhere better than in solitude.⁴⁵

³⁷ *Inv. contra med.* IV, 169: 'Sed sit nature obsequendum, sitque homo naturaliter animal politicum....' Marsh, 142; referring to Aristotle, *Politics*, 1253a1-3.

³⁸ *Inv. contra med.* IV, 169; Marsh, 142. The same view that in solitude a man can still benefit society is repeated at IV, 172; Marsh, 146.

³⁹ *Inv. contra med.* IV, 169; Marsh, 142.

⁴⁰ This is a parody of Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, I, 7, 1097a – 1, 8, 1099b.

⁴¹ *Inv. contra med.*, IV, 171: '...concedam, ne de hoc ipso noviter litigandum sit, esse preter virtutem bona, quibus urbes abundare non negem, in quibus fornicem, balnea, macellum, mulsum, adipem, pulmentum, et que sunt similia numeratis.'; Marsh, 144. This description echoes Petrarch's scathing description of worldly existence in a letter to Lombardo della Seta; *Sen.* XI, 10.

⁴² *Inv. contra med.*, IV, 171; Marsh, 144.

⁴³ *Inv. contra med.*, IV, 173; Marsh, 146.

⁴⁴ *Inv. contra med.*, IV, 172: 'Sancta rusticitas sibi soli prodest: studiosa autem solitudo prodesse posse quamplurimus non negatur. Et ipse Ieronimus, qui hoc dixit, quantum solitudine delectatus et quantum ibi mundo utilis fuerit, sciunt omnes.' Marsh, 146.

⁴⁵ *Inv. contra med.*, IV, 175: 'Constat autem nunquam melius esse anime quam dum, amotis obstaculis viteque compedibus, in Deum atque in se ipsam libera tandem et expedita convertitur. Enimvero id, dum sumus in terris, nusquam melius quam in solitudine fieri posse...' Marsh, 148. In the following sentences, Petrarch quotes St. Augustine's rendition of Plato, *Phaedo*, 80D-81E and it is worth noting that St. Augustine's continuation of the point in the *De vera religione* may have served as the direct model for the early part of this paragraph. See Augustine, *De vera religione*, iii, 3.

Consequently, while not everyone could emulate Jerome perfectly, Petrarch confesses that he would rather be saved alone than perish with the many.⁴⁶ Just as 'solitude' is defined in relation to the casting off of 'life's obstacles and shackles' rather than to physical isolation, *otium* is once again identified with the negation of worldly desires and the liberty of loving God.

In these four texts, the *otium negotiosum* is a form of 'active' leisure. In stark contrast to the *otium otiosum*, it is a leisure from worldly desires and, as Brian Vickers has observed, is consequently placed firmly between *virtus* and *fortuna*. The opposite of sinfulness and vice, it is a continual striving after the good and leads to a genuine peace, untroubled by temporal distractions. As such, it is also conceived in opposition to *accidia*, or spiritual sloth, and is presented as a remedy both to the idle sorrow to which Gaudium is prey in the *De remediis utriusque fortune* and to the paralysing melancholy from which Franciscus suffers in the *Secretum*.

This understanding of *otium* consciously engages with classical, patristic and monastic traditions, and Petrarch seems wilfully to have woven their different aspects together. Initially, Petrarch's *otium* seems to resonate particularly strongly with classical concepts of leisure. His distinction between the *otium otiosum* and the *otium negotiosum*, for example, appears to evoke Ennius,⁴⁷ while his belief in the *Invective contra medicum* that the productive use of leisure could have the corollary effect of aiding humanity more generally recalls the sentiments of both Cicero and Seneca.⁴⁸ Ovidian motifs, especially in relation to the association between *otium* and composition, are also in evidence in the *Secretum*.⁴⁹ By the same token, Petrarch toys with the familiar classical association of urban living with vice. Although he stops short of the underlying moral connotations, Petrarch emulates Sallust,⁵⁰ Livy⁵¹ and Seneca⁵² in associating the city with moral turpitude, and implicitly accepting that – while it may not actually 'transmit' vice – it could manifest the sinfulness of those who seek its pleasures so ardently.⁵³

This classical influence, however, is intertwined with strong patristic and monastic themes, aided in no small part by the absorption of the earlier tradition into the later.

⁴⁶ *Inv. contra med.*, IV, 175; Marsh, 146.

⁴⁷ Ennius, *Iphigenia*, recorded in Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae*, XIX, x, 12; q.v. Vickers, 'Leisure and idleness,' 6.

⁴⁸ Seneca, *De otio*, IV, 1-2; Cicero, *De officiis*, III, i, 1-3.

⁴⁹ Ovid, *Tristia*, I, I, 39ff, see n.33, above.

⁵⁰ Sallust, *Bellum Catilinae*, XI, 5.

⁵¹ Livy, *Ab urbe condita*, XXIII, xviii, 10-13.

⁵² Seneca, *Ep.* Li, 5; see W. A. Laidlaw, 'Otium,' *Greece and Rome* 2nd ser., 15/1 (April 1968): 42-52, here 43-4.

⁵³ Vickers, 'Leisure and idleness,' 15; J.-M. André, *L'otium dans la vie morale et intellectuelle romaine des origines à l'époque augustéenne* (Paris, 1966), 381.

Petrarch's equation of the *otium otiosum* with *accidia* is particularly evocative of the Christian elaboration of classical wariness of unoccupied leisure, and has a parallel in other fourteenth-century treatments of this theme, such as Andrea Bonaiuti's 'The Way to Salvation' in the Spanish Chapel of S. Maria Novella in Florence, which depicts idleness as the vestibule of sin. The moral frame of reference for Petrarch's *otium* is ultimately Christian, and the importance of virtue as a love of God runs through the four texts examined above. For Evagrius and John Cassian, for example, as for Petrarch, idleness was the vestibule of *acedia*,⁵⁴ and in later centuries, St. Benedict and St. Bernard of Clairvaux, amongst others, came to condemn the *otium otiosum* as the enemy of the soul and as an obstruction to virtue.⁵⁵ Similarly, Petrarch's distinction between the two types of *otium*, while clearly informed by classical thought, also betrays hints of later influences. It is interesting to note, for example, that in distinguishing between the *otium otiosum* and the *otium negotiosum* in the *De remediis utriusque fortune*, Ratio employs St. Augustine's contrast between *utor* and *fruor*,⁵⁶ while in the *Secretum*, Augustinus' discussion of productive leisure integrates allusions to Horace and Ovid into a broader treatment of self-knowledge and the *meditatio mortis*.

3. The object of *otium* and the notion of respite in the *De otio religioso*

As in the *Secretum* and the *Invective contra medicum*, Petrarch examines *otium* as a component of the virtuous life in the *De otio religioso* and similarly presents it as a freedom from worldly desires. Unlike the other texts, however, the *De otio religioso* considers the concept in relation to the acquisition of knowledge essential for salvation. Having explained his intentions, Petrarch takes as his text for the tract a line from *Ps.* 45: *vacate et videte quoniam ego sum Deus* – 'have leisure and see that I am God.'⁵⁷ Although this can be understood as a description of the relationship between peace in this world and the next,⁵⁸ Petrarch wished it to be understood in a more sophisticated, but not unrelated fashion. For Petrarch, '*videte*' could be viewed as a synonym for '*noscete*' and hence the verse referred to

⁵⁴ Cassian, *De institutis coenobiorum*, X, 21; Vickers, 'Leisure and idleness,' 108; Wenzel, *The Sin of Sloth*, 19-22; Wenzel, 'Petrarch's *Accidia*,' 39-40.

⁵⁵ St. Bernard of Clairvaux, *De consideratione*, II, 13; St. Benedict, *Regula*, 48; quoted in Vickers, 'Leisure and idleness,' 108.

⁵⁶ On this distinction, see St. Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, I, 7-10; O. O'Donovan, 'Usus and fruitio in Augustine *De Doctrina Christiana* I,' *Journal of Theological Studies* 33 (1982): 361-97; W. R. O'Connor, 'The uti/frui Distinction in Augustine's Ethics,' *Augustinian Studies* 14 (1983): 45-62.

⁵⁷ *De otio*, I, 1: 'Unde vero nunc ordinari, seu quid primum semiabsens dicam, nisi quod totus presens dicere volui, illud nempe davidicum: "Vacate et videte," quod, ut nostis, in psalmo quarto et quadragesimo regius propheta et propheticus ille rex posuit?' Rotondi, 2, ll.23-6; quoting *Ps.* 45: 11.

⁵⁸ *De otio*, I, 1; Rotondi, 4, ll. 23-4.

the knowledge of God which merited the *vera felicitas*. Accordingly, Petrarch read ‘*vacate et videte*’ both as an indication that *vacatio* should have salvation as its object,⁵⁹ and also as a recognition that *vacatio* – properly exercised – was inextricably bound up with the acquisition of the knowledge which was essential for salvation.⁶⁰

Petrarch’s exegesis of *Ps.* 45:11 – in which *vacatio* is used as the direct equivalent of *otium* – accords *otium* the same function as in the *Secretum* and the *Invective contra medicum*. To achieve *otium* is to recognise in God the one source of *felicitas*, and to apprehend that knowledge which is necessary for salvation. In Petrarch’s more prosaic terms, a man should

have leisure, for in having leisure, you will be at peace, and in being at peace, you will see [i.e., know], and in seeing you will rejoice, and indeed ‘in rejoicing about the truth’ you will be happy. There is no happiness more certain or more sublime.⁶¹

That man was capable of knowing God, Petrarch had no doubt. Not only was it perfectly possible for any human being to recognise in God the source of his salvation, but it was also feasible for a man to know God even though his faculties were imperfect. Although no man is able to see God in the same way as the Apostles did, Petrarch explained that we can ‘see’ God ‘in the work of His miracles, unless we close our eyes.’⁶² The triumph of Christianity over heresy and the destruction of false idols are a demonstration of God’s unlimited mercy.⁶³ Just as His will can be seen in the course of history, so His mercy could be accessed by all men. Evoking the spirit of St. Augustine’s doctrine of divine illumination, Petrarch argued that there is an ‘internal light’ which allows devoted souls to see Christ always in their minds with a form of ‘spiritual vision’.⁶⁴

⁵⁹ *De otio*, I, 1; Rotondi, 2, ll.26-9.

⁶⁰ *De otio*, I, 1; Rotondi, 4, ll. 24-26; c.f. Augustine, *De vera religione*, liii, 103, quoting I *Cor* 13:9-10.

⁶¹ *De otio*, I, 1: ‘Vacate ergo, nam vacando utique quiescetis, quiescendoque videbitis, videndoque gaudebitis, “gaudendo” autem “de veritate” felices eritis; qua nulla certior felicitas, nulla sublimior.’ Rotondi, 5, ll.22-5, quoting I *Cor.* 13:6. The quotation from this chapter of I *Cor* when following an argument so similar to that of the *De vera religione* does seem to raise the question of whether Petrarch intended to remain so close to St. Augustine at this point.

⁶² *De otio*, I, 5: ‘Cristum in carne non vidimus eo modo quo apostolis est visus, quamvis eum in operibus mirabilium suorum, nisi oculos claudimus, assidue videamus.’ Rotondi, 32, ll.4-6.

⁶³ *De otio*, I, 5; Rotondi, 32, ll.25-30. Earlier in the chapter, Petrarch (I, 5; Rotondi, 31, ll. 11-16) quotes Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, xviii, 53 in support of the view that God’s hand could be seen behind the turning of the world towards Christ.

⁶⁴ *De otio*, I, 5: ‘Nobis vero iam, gratis illi qui usqueadeo immeritos nos dilexit, hec omnia sine ullis externis testibus clara sunt et ita se oculis fidelium divine lucis radii infundunt, ut nemo tam cecus sit qui non “iustitie solem” Cristum mente perspiciat; et quamvis ab ipsa veritate verissimum dictum sit “Beati oculi qui vident que vos videtis,” ego tamen hanc ipsam interni luminis claritatem, qua post Cristi reditum ad celos et nunc et usque in finem seculi devote anime non carneis oculis sed spiritus

Despite this, however, Petrarch was conscious that there were obstacles to happiness. Implicit in his exegesis is a recognition of human fallibility and throughout the *De otio*, Petrarch bemoaned a range of flaws. He concentrates, however, on humanity's capacity for self-deceit and distraction. Citing St. Ambrose as his authority, he wrote that

the journey of life is beset by an unforeseen infestation of demons or a multitude of thieves, with whom invisible subverters of souls prepare fearful traps on all paths for the deaths of innumerable people.⁶⁵

These 'demons', 'thieves' and *supplantores invisī* are the falsehoods which could entice the unwary away from the path of true knowledge. Elaborating further on their identity, Petrarch urged the monks of Montrieux to resist the 'impious devices' of such 'enemies' and warns them to be particularly wary of

the three varieties of the enemies' weapons: the snares of the world, the lures of the flesh and the wiles of demons. The first promises the most useless of things, the second flatters as a familiar, and the third whispers dreadful counsel to mortals ... the world fools you, the flesh appeases you, demons drive you on: from the first, you have no hope; from the second, you have no pleasure; from the third, you have no guidance. All conspire equally for your destruction and death.⁶⁶

If a person is to attain to the knowledge necessary for salvation, he must necessarily avoid these weapons of falsehood. Insofar as *otium* is – as *Ps.* 45:11 suggests – a predicate of knowledge, it is evident that Petrarch intended it to be at least in part a form of 'leisure' from such falsehoods.⁶⁷ To possess a *vacatio a mendacibus* was to possess the peace which was necessary to 'see' the divine truth clearly by the 'inner light' of the soul.

Petrarch's preliminary description of *otium* places it, as in the *Secretum* and the *Invective contra medicum*, between virtue and vice. Its position, however, is more specific than in either of the other texts. Developing a theme latent in the *Secretum*, Petrarch begins to define *otium* in stark opposition to the absence of hope, and to the illusory pleasures of the world. It is, he indicates, bound up with the perception of the divine truth and entails the negation of the 'wiles of demons', the 'snares of the world' and the 'lures of the flesh'.

acie Cristum videbunt, illi corporee visioni quadam ex parte non imparem demonstrabo.' Rotondi, 29, ll.12-21.

⁶⁵ *De otio*, I, 3: 'Quando, ut ait Ambrosius, iter vite occulta demonum infestatio vel latronum obsidet multitudo, quibus per omnes vias supplantatores invisī animarum laqueos tendunt innumerabilium mortibus expavescendos...' Rotondi, 18, ll.16-19. It is unclear which of St. Ambrose's writings Petrarch had in mind in this passage.

⁶⁶ *De otio*, I, 3: 'Occurrite paratibus impiis et vitate tria in primis hostium atque armorum genera, mundi laqueos, carnis illecebras, demonum dolos. Ille vanissima spondet, hec familiariter blanditur, illi autem pessima consilia mortalibus insurrant. ... Mundus fallit, mulcet caro, demones impellunt: nulla vobis inde spes, nulla hinc voluptas, nullum inde consilium: omnes pariter vestram in perniciem mortemque conspirant.' Rotondi, 15, l.28 – p.16, l.2.

⁶⁷ e.g. *De otio*, I, 3; Rotondi, 16, ll.10-12, quoting *John*, 8:44; c.f. Dante, *Inferno*, xxiii, 144.

Whereas in the *Secretum*, *otium* is discussed in the context of an enumeration of the seven deadly sins, in the *De otio religioso*, it is considered as a response to the traditional scheme of the Three Enemies of Man, which had become a commonplace in moral literature following the ascetic impulses in monasticism which had arisen since the tenth century. Indeed, Petrarch's description of the Three Enemies closely mimics those given by St. Bernard and Hugh of St. Victor and, while the implied grouping of the seven deadly sins into these three categories allows a parallel with the *Secretum* to be maintained, it is clear that he intended to define *otium* in relation to a conventional monastic conception of vice and the threats to divine knowledge.

Petrarch's initial treatment of the theme is, however, only very lightly sketched and it is unclear whether *otium* entailed the 'active' intellectual negation of competing thoughts and desires, or required a more physical form of peace from external stimuli. In order to establish the identity of *otium* with greater precision, it is necessary to look more closely at the manner in which Petrarch's *otium* constituted a respite from the 'snares of the world', the 'lures of the flesh' and the 'wiles of demons' which together threatened the perception of truth.

4. *Otium* as a respite from the 'wiles of demons'

Petrarch's first concern is with the threat posed by 'demons'. Through out the first book of the *De otio*, these 'demons' are described in the manner of St. Augustine.⁶⁸ Peddlers in deceit, they are portrayed as *mediators* always anxious to seduce a man away from the truth. Perhaps recalling the temptation of Christ, Petrarch suggests that 'demons' endeavour constantly to erode man's belief in his capacity to redeem himself.⁶⁹ Although the coming of Christ and of Christianity had struck fear into Satan's heart,⁷⁰ that 'sly old spirit' would never cease trying to obstruct those striving for salvation and would continue to put doubt in the way of faith.⁷¹

In describing the 'demons', Petrarch's wording is deliberately cautious. It is not that the Devil and his minions delude men into doubting that God is merciful, but rather that the satanic hordes cause human beings to doubt their own capacity for redemption.⁷² In an

⁶⁸ Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, IX, 18 describes *daemones* as 'falsi autem fallacesque mediatores'. Quillen, *Rereading the Renaissance*, 163.

⁶⁹ c.f. Matt. 4:9.

⁷⁰ *De otio*, I, 5; Rotondi, 32, l.35 – 33, l.4, quoting Lactantius, *Div. Inst.*, I, 9.

⁷¹ *De otio*, I, 3; Rotondi, 21, ll.1-4.

⁷² Petrarch accepts that there are many people who deny that in the person of Christ, God provided man with the facility to merit salvation and specifically mentions the Jew, Muslims, Averroists,

awkwardly worded passage, Petrarch argues that while God has provided man with every opportunity to redeem himself, and while it is possible for man to 'see' Christ,

this matter is in doubt for many people, [because] there is such a cloud of suspicions, such a dizziness of minds and such torpid diffidence. This is not because anyone entirely doubts the power of God – unless he is mad – but because man distrusts his own merit and does not dare wish or hope for as much as he sees freely granted to him without his having asked and therefore, comparing the magnitude of the heavenly blessing with his own unworthiness, he begins to ask himself whether his happiness is real, or whether he is deceived by an illusion and as it were some blessed dream – as if human merit had any part in this and it were not wholly by God's mercy not only that we are fortunate but that we are.⁷³

While a man may believe in Christ, in other words, he might still doubt his capacity to tread the path that had been revealed to him.

As suggested by his earlier assertion that they remove hope, Petrarch's 'demons' correspond to the malady of despair. Seduced into the traps of the satanic hordes, a man may feel that he is unable to do anything, despite the fact that God had created the opportunity for humankind to redeem itself. Consumed with a false sense of powerlessness, he succumbs to despair.⁷⁴ This has a very obvious parallel in Franciscus' *accidia* in the *Secretum*. Knocked back by *fortuna*, Franciscus found himself despairing of the possibility of happiness, despite his apparent acceptance of God's mercy, and is paralysed by his *accidia*.⁷⁵

But Petrarch's 'demons' also have broader resonance. The use of the image to denote despair is consonant with an iconographical and theological tradition stretching from

Manicheans and Arians as 'enemies' of the truth in this respect. However, Petrarch's primary concern in this section of the tract is with *Christian* doubters: those who believe in Christ as redeemer, but who doubt their own capacity to achieve salvation. *De otio*, I, 4; Rotondi, 23, 1.2 – 24, 1.11. These examples of the 'enemies' of truth are not randomly chosen: the Jews and Muslims actively denied Christ's divinity, and the Arians were generally accepted to deny the same, while the Manicheans conceived of Christ as 'a manifestation of the Saving Intellect or *Nous*'; G. Bonner, *St. Augustine of Hippo: Life and Controversies*, 3rd. ed., (Norwich, 2002), 161. The Latin Averroists of Petrarch's day believed that man could achieve salvation merely through the application of his intellect and, at the least, gave the impression of seriously undervaluing the role of Christ. For a useful introduction to Latin Averroism, see S. Ebbesen, 'The Paris arts faculty: Siger of Brabant, Boethius of Dacia, Radulphus Brito,' in J. Marenbon, ed., *Routledge History of Philosophy*, vol. 3, *Medieval Philosophy* (London, 1998), 269-90. On Siger of Brabant, see, for example, E. P. Mahoney, 'Sense, intellect and imagination in Albert, Thomas and Siger,' in N. Kretzmann, A. Kenny and J. Pinborg, eds., *The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1982), 611-22.

⁷³ *De otio*, I, 5: 'Que licet ita sint ut diximus, multis tamen adhuc res in dubium redit, tanta suspitionum nubes, tanta vertigo mentium, tantus diffidentie torpor inest; non quia de potentia Dei quisquam omnino, nisi amens, dubitet, sed quia de suo merito diffidit homo neque tantum vel optare audeat vel sperare, quantum sibi ultro videt impensum, ideoque magnitudinem beneficii celestis cum indignitate sua conferens hesitare incipit secumque disquirere vera ne felicitas sua sit, an prestigio et velut beato quodam somnio eludatur, quasi ulle prorsus in hoc humani meriti partes sint et non totum misericordie Dei sit, non modo quod felices sumus, sed quod sumus.' Rotondi, 33, 1.31 – 34, 1.4.

⁷⁴ *De otio*, I, 6; Rotondi, 37, 11.12-24, quoting *Hab.* 3:2.

⁷⁵ e.g. *Secretum*, II; *Prose*, 106-8.

the desert fathers to the fourteenth century. Developing a theme in early Christian demonology, Evagrius, for example, spoke frequently of the ‘demon of ἀχιδία’ and ‘the spirit of ἀχιδία’.⁷⁶ The assaults of demons plagued the monk with particular vigour at noon and, filling him with a hatred for everything, induced despair and the desire to quit the ascetic life. Later, Isidore of Seville described despair as a trick used by the Devil,⁷⁷ and from at least the fourteenth century onwards, the idea of *accidia* or *tristitia* as a weapon of demons recurs often, as, for instance, in *The Cloud of Unknowing* and the English treatise, *Agayne Despayre*.⁷⁸ Within the scheme of the Three Enemies of Man, *acedia* was accorded a variety of roles, but during the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, it was commonly defined as a temptation of the Devil, and notable examples can be found in the sermons of Jacques de Vitry, Robert Grosseteste’s *Templum domini* and Jean de Journi’s *La Dime de penitance*, as well as in the *Cursor mundi* and the *Speculum morale*.⁷⁹

The inclusion of despair in discussions of *otium* was, moreover, not uncommon. Unproductive leisure – the *otium otiosum* – was causally connected with melancholy and spiritual sloth in monastic literature. Indeed, as Brian Vickers has observed, ‘[o]nce the seven deadly sins had been codified as an entity for homilectics it was inevitable that *otium*, being already equated with *pigritia*, *ignavia* and *desidia*, should be subsumed under *acedia*’.⁸⁰ Following the example of John Cassian and Gregory the Great, theologians from the thirteenth century onwards customarily included *otium* or *otiositas* among the progeny of *acedia*, and unproductive leisure appears prominently in Alvarus Pelagius’ fourteenth-century description of the branches of *acedia* alongside *negligentia*, *tarditas*, *indevotio*, *tristitia* and *tedium vite*, amongst others.⁸¹

Beginning with Cassian, this association between *otium* and *acedia* served as the basis for recommending a productive leisure – *otium negotium* – which entailed labour, primarily in a monastic setting.⁸² Connected with the proverbial image of the slothful man placing his hand in his bosom, the pairing *otiosus* – *acedia* was to be remedied by physical labour, or work with the hands.⁸³ In placing productive *otium* in opposition to *acedia*,

⁷⁶ Wenzel, *The Sin of Sloth*, 12. See also J. Daniélou, ‘Démon II – Dans la littérature ecclésiastique jusqu’à Origène,’ in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité ascétique et mystique*, (Paris, 1957), 3: 152-89.

⁷⁷ Isidore of Seville, *Senentiarum libri III*, II, 14, 3; quoted in S. Snyder, ‘The Left Hand of God: Despair in Medieval and Renaissance Tradition,’ *Studies in the Renaissance* 12 (1965): 18-59, here 23.

⁷⁸ *The Cloud of Unknowing and the Book of Privy Counselling*, ed. P. Hodgson, (London, 1944), 84; *Agayne Despayre*, B.M. ms. Add. 37049, fol. 92v.; quoted in Snyder, ‘The Left Hand of God,’ 23, 38.

⁷⁹ Wenzel, *The Sin of Sloth*, 167.

⁸⁰ Vickers, ‘Leisure and idleness,’ 108

⁸¹ Wenzel, ‘Petrarch’s *accidia*,’ 41.

⁸² Vickers, ‘Leisure and idleness,’ 110.

⁸³ *Prov.* 19:24; 26:15; Vickers, ‘Leisure and Idleness,’ 110; Wenzel, *The Sin of Sloth*, 122-5.

Petrarch participated in the spirit of this tradition, but in the context of the tension he identified between the ‘wiles of demons’ and the perception of divine knowledge, he appears to be closer to the thought of the desert fathers, and seems almost to have Latinised the positive meaning attached to the Greek term ἀπάθεια. Brought into Christian moral theology from Greek Stoicism by Clement of Alexandria, the term came to be associated with a freedom from the passions (πάθη), the use of reason and the attainment of divine knowledge.⁸⁴ For the desert fathers, the object of ἀπάθεια was a form of peace (ἡσυχία) in which πάθη were kept under the sway of reason.⁸⁵ Indeed, with demonic ἀχηδία in mind, Evagrius wrote that ‘[t]he Kingdom of Heaven is the ἀπάθεια of the soul, with a true knowledge of the things that exist.’⁸⁶

Petrarch was confident that the danger posed by ‘demons’ could be remedied. Towards the end of the first book of the *De otio religioso*, *otium* becomes a solution to despair. Rather than being a form of manual labour, however, it was an active leisure which recalls the slothful to their capacity for redemption, and restores the grounds for hope. At several points in the text, Petrarch stresses that in the face of numerous deceptions, it is essential neither to forget God’s limitless power and mercy, nor to lose hope.⁸⁷ Being able to do anything, God has also done everything to facilitate the salvation of mankind and it is this particular fact which in Petrarch’s view must be recalled.⁸⁸

The recollection which Petrarch recommends relies for its effectiveness on the value of reading and meditation. Satan’s ‘deceitful language’⁸⁹ can most effectively be resisted with the ‘sharp arrows of a powerful [God] together with the coals of desolation.’⁹⁰ The ‘sharp arrows’ and the ‘coals of desolation’ need to be distinguished.

The ‘sharp arrows’ are ‘the Apostles and their messages’ and they constitute Petrarch’s primary solution to doubt and despair.⁹¹ A close reading of Scripture and a sincere contemplation of the meaning of the Apostles’ words can, Petrarch argues, help the

⁸⁴ Wenzel, *The Sin of Sloth*, 13.

⁸⁵ *ibid.*, 14.

⁸⁶ quoted at Wenzel, *The Sin of Sloth*, 14.

⁸⁷ *De otio*, I, 4; Rotondi, 25, ll.19-22; 26, l.5.

⁸⁸ *De otio*, I, 4; Rotondi, 26, ll.26-32.

⁸⁹ The notion of a *lingua dolosa* being in tension with a devotion to God was a lexical commonplace of medieval spirituality.

⁹⁰ *De otio*, I, 7: ‘Inde igitur talia suadente illo, quid detur aut quid apponatur nobis ad linguam dolosam? Si hoc queritis respondetur vobis per prophetam: “Sagitte potentis acute cum carbonibus desolatoriis”.’ Rotondi, 45, ll.10-12, quoting *Ps.* 119:4.

⁹¹ *De otio*, I, 7: ‘Sagittas vero quas alias opinemur, nisi apostolos ac nuntios, quos potens ille de quo loquimur in medium suorum hostium iaculatus est, seu verba vite et testimonia Evangelii late sparsa et sive per illos, sive per seipsum regum ac populorum infixata sunt pectoribus, non doloris asperi, sed predulcis amoris causativo vulnere, de quibus ipse non semel sed iterum et iterum gloriabundus et exultans dicit: “In nomine Domini quia ultus sum in eos”?’ Rotondi, 46, ll. 10-17, quoting *Ps.* 117:10-12.

despairing believer to understand more fully the fallacy of his doubt and the extent of God's power. Confronted with Satan's 'deceitful language'

You will turn to the divine counsels and arm yourself with the words of Christ himself. For you will hear foretold by Him the troubles, labours, dangers and scandals of this life and whatever you must endure in this span of time. From the opposite side, you will hear [about] the rewards of a better life and the consolations promised to those who work to the end. This is given to you and stands opposed to a deceitful tongue.⁹²

The words of God, which foretell the hardships of this life, provide a true heuristic for understanding man's position in this world, while the act of reading itself is less significant than the internalisation of the message.

Should a man still have doubt, however, Petrarch advises him to have recourse to the 'coals of desolation'.⁹³ Addressing the monks of Montrieux, he explains that this term – which perhaps evokes the spiritual language of St. John of the Cross – is the example provided by 'ardent and burning souls of those who have preceded you in this holy endeavour'.⁹⁴ While maintaining a sincere admiration for the achievements of the saints, Petrarch invites the monks to consider whether they were any weaker than these holy men and women.⁹⁵ Reading the lives or writings of saints can, he suggests, help a person to recognise that his humanity need be no bar to the most holy of virtues and can give the despairing greater strength in their pursuit of God. The act of reading was, in this case, secondary to the process of experiential identification.⁹⁶

The 'sharp arrows' and the 'coals of desolation' provide an intriguing insight into the nature of *otium* in relation to doubt and despair. Placed between *virtus* and despair, *otium* can be understood in two ways. At one level, the concept appears to be relatively straightforward. Petrarch recognises in 'demons' a threat to the apprehension of truth, and calls upon the monks of Montrieux to 'manage' their leisure in such a way that they may yet ascend to eternal rest.⁹⁷ This 'management' of leisure must necessarily involve the setting

⁹² *De otio*, I, 8: 'Ad divina deinde consilia te convertes teque ipsius Cristi verbis armabis. Audies enim ab illo prenuntiatas huius vite molestias et labores et pericula et scandala et quicquid in hoc cursu temporum tibi patiendum est. Audies ab adverso melioris vite premia atque solatia in finem promissa laborantibus. Hoc tibi datur et apponitur ad linguam dolosam.' Rotondi, 47, ll.23-28.

⁹³ *De otio*, I, 8: '...quotiens istis urgemini, fratres, neque ad defensionem verba neque acute sufficiunt sagitte, tum demum carbones desolatorii in medium proferantur...' Rotondi, 48, ll.1-3.

⁹⁴ *De otio*, I, 8: 'carbones vero desolatorios seu vastatores, utrunque enim in antiquis codicibus lectum est, quid aliud putem, nisi ardentes et ignitas animas eorum, qui vos in hoc sancto proposito precesserunt?' Rotondi, 46, ll.19-22.

⁹⁵ *De otio*, I, 8; Rotondi, 48, ll. 3-8.

⁹⁶ It is perhaps possible to observe a parallel in the position of the reader in the *Secretum*: q.v. Kahn, 'The Figure of the Reader'; Quillen, *Rereading the Renaissance*, 134-6, 145-7, 182-216. c.f. Petrarch on identification with St. Augustine, *Sen.* VI, 9.

⁹⁷ *De otio*, I, 7; Rotondi, 43, ll. 21-27.

aside of time for reading. In this sense, Petrarch's understanding of *otium* is fairly conventional and seems to correspond both to the emphasis on study in most monastic rules, and to the artistic tradition of representing the reading of holy books as a defence against the wiles of demons in the late Middle Ages, itself a continuation of the iconographical connection between demonic temptation and despair.⁹⁸ The reading of Holy Scripture was, for example, explicitly recommended as a response to *acedia* by Alvarus Peraldus in his *Summa de vitiis et virtutibus*.⁹⁹ As we have seen, however, Petrarch's treatment of reading as a response to doubt and despair had a more subtle dimension. Despite the vividness of his imagery, demons were for Petrarch never anything more than a convenient emblem for an intellectual infelicity, a cipher for the obstruction doubt and despair posed to the perception of truth. The remedy which he prescribes is similarly intellectual. Rather than the act of reading itself acquiring any intrinsic meaning, it is the associated intellectual processes of inculcation and identification which serve to combat the reader's doubt and despair. As a result, this component of Petrarch's *otium* acquires a more interior meaning than might initially appear. Indisputably an *otium* whose object is the apprehension of a higher truth, it involves the negation of mental obstructions. Its operative component, although rooted in the physical activity of reading, is ultimately an intellectual exercise. Through an absorption of Scripture, a man may place himself in relation both to the world and to the eternal; by identifying himself with the humanity of the saints, he may comprehend and trust his capacity to transcend the mortal and merit the *vera felicitas* of the next life. In that he placed emphasis on experiential identification as a prelude to virtue, Petrarch appears to pre-empt trends in later humanistic attitudes towards the writing and reading of saints' lives. Examining the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste as an inspirational model for the troops of Alfonso V of Aragon, Lorenzo Valla implicitly recognised that it was the authentic and human reality of these pre-Constantinian martyrs which allowed them to be fully imitable models.¹⁰⁰ So too, for Raffaele Maffei, the benefit of reading saints' lives lay in the reader's capacity to identify themselves with real – and occasionally flawed – exemplars of virtue.¹⁰¹ Proposing early Christian saints as models for imitation by secular figures, Tomasso d'Arezzo and Antonio degli Agli not merely achieved a 'broadening of the religious vision' comparable to

⁹⁸ In an illustration by Jean Fouquet for the *Heures d'Etienne Chevalier* (c.1450-60), for example, St. Bernard is depicted being tempted by the deceits of a hideous winged demon. Visibly rejecting the demon's wiles, St. Bernard remains dedicated to the study of an unknown book at his reading desk. For the development of this view during the Renaissance, see T. Hampton, *Writing from History: The Rhetoric of Exemplarity in Renaissance Literature* (Ithaca, 1990).

⁹⁹ Alvarus Peraldus, *Summa de vitiis et virtutibus*, V, 1, 2; cited in Wenzel, *The Sin of Sloth*, 195.

¹⁰⁰ A. Knowles Frazier, *Possible Lives. Authors and Saints in Renaissance Italy* (New York, 2005), 61-4, 96-7.

¹⁰¹ *ibid.*, 307-20.

Petrarch's own enterprise, but also relied on experiential identification to achieve this end in the same way as Petrarch employed the same method in the *De otio religioso*.¹⁰²

5. *Otium* as a respite from the 'snares of the world' and the 'lures of the flesh'

The impression that Petrarch's *otium* was conceived as an interior leisure which was not essentially connected to the influence of physical circumstances, but which was built on the active removal of intellectual obstacles is repeated when he turned to consider *otium* as a response to the 'snares of the world' and the 'lures of the flesh'.¹⁰³

Petrarch's description of the nature and negation of the 'snares of the world' and the 'lures of the flesh' is highly involved and frequently repetitious. His explanation of the manner in which these temptations threatened virtue, however, is relatively simple, and it quickly becomes clear that, like the 'demons' of the first book, they are products of the agent's mind rather than the result of physical contact.

As in the *Secretum*, Petrarch considered the desire for corporeal things to be a submission to the fleeting and the ephemeral. Wealth, glory and renown captivate men, but are nevertheless insubstantial and unenduring. All worldly things change and the high prizes so earnestly sought are ultimately lost through death.¹⁰⁴ The fine tombs of great men finally contain nothing but ashes, snakes and worms.¹⁰⁵ Evoking Heraclitus' notion of flux elsewhere, Petrarch felt that it was foolish to seek happiness in fleeting things.¹⁰⁶ It was, however, the contrast between the transience of the temporal and the permanence of the eternal which shaped his criticism most significantly. In looking at the shifting world around him, the ambitious man loses sight of the one true happiness, and of the virtue which will carry his immortal soul to heaven. In a powerful lament, Petrarch exclaims

The sum of all things returns to nothing, and [still], o, the madness, o, the blindness! With so much enthusiasm do [men] accumulate perishable riches and how great is the care for property which will neither endure nor follow us:

¹⁰² *ibid.*, 96-7.

¹⁰³ In the second book of the *De otio religioso*, the 'snares of the world' and the 'lures of the flesh' are formally separate subjects but, as Roland Witt has observed in his introduction to Susan Shearer's translation, the two topics are so closely related and so tightly intertwined that it is almost meaningless to attempt to consider them as distinct strands of argumentation. In terms of the obstruction they pose to *otium* and the attainment of the *vera felicitas*, they are in every sense identical. R. G. Witt, 'Introduction' to Petrarch, *On Religious Leisure*, ed. and trans. Scheerer, ix-xxii, here xviii.

¹⁰⁴ *De otio*, II, 1; Rotondi, 62, ll. 16-29; 63, ll. 10-11.

¹⁰⁵ *De otio*, II, 1; Rotondi, 62, ll. 16-25, quoting Virgil, *Aen.* VI, 848. Also *De otio*, II, 1; Rotondi, 63, ll. 10-11.

¹⁰⁶ *De otio*, II, 1; Rotondi, 59, ll. 23-6, quoting Seneca, *Ep.* lviii, 23.

the virtue that will accompany [us] to the end and that will carry [us] to Heaven is neglected.¹⁰⁷

Forgetting that he is the recipient of God's grace, the man who devotes himself to the 'instruments of mortal fame' makes himself 'like the foolish beasts of burden' and forsakes his own unique capacity for redemption.¹⁰⁸ Referring to the *Aeneid*, Petrarch asserted that those who are seduced by temporal snares and lures seem to have drawn something from each of the rivers of Tartarus. 'They seem,' he wrote,

freely to have drawn a forgetfulness of one's better nature from the Lethe, a ferment of anger and desires from the Phlegethon, a fruitless penitence and grief from the Acheron, sorrow and tears from the Cocytus and enmity and hatred from the Styx.¹⁰⁹

Petrarch explains that this 'forgetfulness of one's better nature' should be equated with an abandonment of the divine gift of reason. 'Desire,' he contended,

commands not only that God, who may not be observed except with the most pure eyes, cannot be seen, but [also] that there is no place within for reason or, as a logical consequence, for humanity (*humanitati*), which can neither exist nor be understood without reason [.] Indeed, the character of the man having been stripped away, the mind is made savage and arrives at such misery that he turns the most splendid gift of God – the reason [that is] sent from Heaven – to the dark and foul indulgence of desires, 'like the horse and the mule, in whom there is no understanding.'¹¹⁰

As Petrarch had explained in the previous chapter using the rivers of Babylon as a point of comparison, those who take pleasure in the 'errors, instabilities and flight of temporal things' are swept far away from the 'regal city' in which salvation lies.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁷ *De otio*, II, 1: 'Summa omnium in nichilum redit, et, o furor, o cecitas! Cum tanto studio periture divitie cumulentur, tanta non mansure neque nos secutire rei familiaris sit cura mortalibus, virtus comitatura in finem et ad superos pervectura negligitur.' Rotondi, 55, ll.15-19.

¹⁰⁸ *De otio*, II, 1: '...audivimus instrumenta fame mortalis: sepulcra domos, posteritatis memoriam et aliam quamlibet perituri nominis claritatem. Que omnia cum supervacui laboris atque amentie plena sint, nostis quam mordax insipientie bestialis exprobatio sequitur et eodem psalmo ad exaggerationem insanie iteratur: "Homo cum in honore esset non intellexit, comparatus est iumentis insipientibus et similis factus est illis".' Rotondi, 57, ll.8-14; quoting *Ps.* 48:13.

¹⁰⁹ *De otio*, II, 1: '...de Lethe oblivionem nature melioris, de Flegetonte irarum estus atque cupidinum, de Acheronte infructuosam penitentiam et dolorem, de Cocito luctus ac lacrimas, de Stige inimicitias atque odia largiter hausisse videantur...' Rotondi, 58, ll. 24-7.

¹¹⁰ *De otio*, II, 2: '...libido imperat non modo Deum non videri, qui nisi purgatissimis oculis non videtur ... sed nullum penitus rationi esse locum consequenterque nec humanitati, que sine ratione nec esse potest nec intelligi, exui quippe mores hominis efferarique animum eoque miseriarum pervenire ut preclarissimum Dei donum rationem celitus datam sibi, ... "sicut equus et mulus quibus non est intellectus" ad obscurum et turpe libidinum vertat obsequium [.]' Rotondi, 71, ll.5-6, 7-12, quoting *Ps.* 31:9.

¹¹¹ *De otio*, II, 1: 'Hec sunt flumina Babilonis quorum meminit Scriptura, videlicet lapsus, instabilitas et fuga rerum temporalium ad Babilonis ius spectantium, non civitatis regis cuius incolarum "pedes stantes erant in atriis tuis, Ierusalem"...' Rotondi, 58, ll.16-19, quoting *Ps.* 121:2. It is tempting to suggest that the reference to Babylon is a conscious effort to create a bridge to '*l'empia Babilonia*' in

Petrarch's description of the danger posed by the 'snares of the world' and the 'lures of the flesh' to some degree complement his earlier use of 'demons' to denote despair and his suggestion in other texts that unproductive leisure was the gateway to vice. Placed in opposition to the *otium negotiosum* which Petrarch sought to recommend, the 'snares of the world' and the 'lures of the flesh' are implicitly tied to the *otium otiosum*. Idleness is thus tied to sinfulness just as closely as it is to despair. This is, of course, consonant with the *Secretum*, in which *accidia* is discussed in relation to Franciscus' vices, but also has analogues in the association of *otiositas*, *acedia* and sin in medieval and patristic literature and is intrinsic to the scheme of the Three Enemies of Man. Commonly paired with the *otium otiosum* or *otiositas*, *acedia* was for the duration of the medieval period 'almost always found only in connection with the other capital sins, whether in a mere enumeration or in more extensive treatments.'¹¹² Indeed, there was often a clear causal relation between unproductive *otium*, sinfulness and despair. In the Vulgate, St. Jerome used *otium* to connote the idleness from which vice sprang,¹¹³ while despair was later seen as the 'last stage in a life of sin'¹¹⁴ and appears as the product of habitual sin in the works of St. Gregory the Great and St. Thomas Aquinas.¹¹⁵ Idleness with regard to virtue led to sinfulness, and to despair. All, moreover, are associated with a preference for the world over God and, in later literature, were often rectified with reference to the *ars moriendi*.¹¹⁶

The precise terms in which Petrarch describes the opposition of the 'snares of the world' and the 'lures of the flesh' to virtue are important for our examination of *otium*. Once again, *otium* is placed between *virtus* and *voluptas*, but in a manner which puts it in close relation to self-knowledge and reason. In the opening chapters of the second book of the *De otio religioso*, the 'snares of the world' and the 'lures of the flesh' are presented as inimical to the pursuit of *felicitas* not because physical objects are capable of transmitting vice, but because, in succumbing to his desires, a man forsakes that part of his nature which would

Canz. 114. The suggestion is recommended by the discussion of the flux of cities a few paragraphs later, which includes a further citation of Babylon, but this time as a specific, emblematic city – *De otio*, II, 1; *Rotondi*, 60, l.16ff. It is worth noting that the image of Babylon as 'confusion' is repeated at *Fam.* XV, 9, 16: 'Babilon, hoc est confusio.' On the theme of Babylon in the *Canzoniere* in particular, see N. Iliescu, *Il Canzoniere Petrarcesco e Sant'Agostino*, (Rome, 1962), 133-140; A. H. Hallock, 'The Pre-Eminent Role of Babilonia in Petrarch's Theme of the Two Cities' *Italica* 54/2 (Summer): 290-297; A. Lee, 'Sin City? The Image of Babylon in Petrarch's *Canzoniere*,' in J. Fitzpatrick, ed., *The Idea of the City: Early Modern, Modern and Post-Modern Locations and Communities* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 2009), 39-52.

¹¹² Wenzel, 'Petrarch's *accidia*,' 42.

¹¹³ *Eccles.* 33:29; Vickers, 'Leisure and idleness,' 107.

¹¹⁴ Snyder, 'The Left Hand of God,' 48.

¹¹⁵ St. Gregory the Great, *Moralia*, IV, 51; *P.L.* 85, 662-3; St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 72, a. 7 ad. 2.

¹¹⁶ Snyder, 'The Left Hand of God,' 42-3.

allow him to merit salvation. Permitting himself to seek wealth, to covet power, and to wish for empty honours, he forsakes the natural reason which would allow him to recognise the true source of happiness and merit salvation.

Although Petrarch makes passing reference to salutary reading,¹¹⁷ his solution to the danger posed by the 'snares of the world' and the 'lures of the flesh' focuses on contrasting the fleeting pleasures of this life with the eternal happiness of the next. Death is at the heart of this contrast. Not only does death highlight the ephemeral nature of the objects of men's desires, but it also stands as the point of transition from one sphere of existence to the next, and hence serves as a powerful reminder of the life to come. Using the Delphic injunction to 'know thyself', therefore, Petrarch urges the monks of Montrieux to reflect constantly on their mortality as a means of comprehending how fleeting is worldly existence, and how readily they would be reduced to nothing if they did not abide in God.¹¹⁸

If it is to be efficacious, however, the meditation on death must conform to a certain pattern and inspire a particular mode of living. Many people, Petrarch suggests, regard their mortality incorrectly, and their meditation becomes simply an affirmation of their enslavement to the 'snares of the world' and the 'lures of the flesh'. Petrarch railed against those who entertain an 'empty horror of death' because of their 'imprudent lust for [this] life'.¹¹⁹ If a man is to meditate properly on the meaning of death, he must recognise that it has a significant bearing on the relationship between the mind and the body, and between reason and desire.¹²⁰

Although the mind and body are distinct, they are nevertheless linked and frequently pull in different directions.¹²¹ Where the mind or spirit is subjected to the body, a man ultimately only suffers 'corruption and death', but where the body is subjected to the mind, 'sanctity and eternal life' follow.¹²² Deliberately emulating St. Bernard, Petrarch argued that the person who appreciates the meaning of death leaves his body behind and lives only as a spirit while on earth. For 'there is,' he says,

¹¹⁷ *De otio*, II, 7; Rotondi, 103, ll. 2-10, quoting St. Jerome, *Ep.*, 53, 9.

¹¹⁸ *De otio*, II, 7; Rotondi, 102, ll.19-26.

¹¹⁹ *De otio*, I, 6: 'sileo spes inanes, anxias, infinitas, inexplebiles, inconsultam vite cupidinem, supervacuum mortis horrorem, luctum precocem, risum tardum, cecitatem anime seipsam nescientis, ridiculam ignorantiam rerum variarum et scientiam laboriosam, magis in dies quid sibi desit agnoscentem et profectu notitiae causas laboris ac doloris et indignationis aggregantem.' Rotondi, 37, ll.3-8. Also *De otio*, II, 1; Rotondi, 64, ll.10-20, quoting Cicero, *Tusc.*, I, xxxvi, 86.

¹²⁰ c.f. Petrarch's allegorical discussion of Aeolus and the winds, *Secretum*, II; *Prose*, 122-124.

¹²¹ *De otio*, II, 2; Rotondi, 66, ll.12-16, 22-25, quoting *Rom.* 7:22-23. c.f. *Fam.* II, 5.

¹²² *De otio*, II, 2: 'Quis inter hec hesitet, fratres mei? An erubescere malit, an sanctificari? An stipendium peccati mortem eligat an vitam eternam? Quod si in optione horum nemo dubitat, nec in eo dubitare conveniet, an carni an spiritui sit parendum, cum inde corruptio et mors, hinc sanctitas et eterna vita proveniat.' Rotondi, 68, ll. 26-30.

that universal platonic idea in the *Phaedo* – ‘philosophy is nothing other than a meditation on death’ – where two deaths are portrayed: the one according to nature, the other for the sake of virtue. They say that the first of these should not be summoned or feared, but awaited with a calm mind; the second should be sought with all enthusiasm. Your [brothers] have made especial use of this type of dying, forgetful of all pleasure and desire, living in the body as if they had already escaped the private prison of its members.¹²³

To meditate properly on death, then, is not merely to comprehend the fallacy of temporal desires, but is also to understand the need to live as a pilgrim in the body. This was understood, at least, by Ss. Hilarion, Jerome and Francis, each of whom combated his urges by treating the body as an enemy that had to be beaten into submission.¹²⁴ Excising his desires in this manner and subjecting his body to his mind, a man will be able to exercise his natural capacity for reason and, as a result, will come to know the truth. In this way, Petrarch contends, the unobstructed application of reason allows the soul’s immortal potential to be realised even though the foulness of the mortal body may remain.¹²⁵

The impression of *otium* which emerges from this discussion of the ‘snares of the world’ and the ‘lures of the flesh’ therefore has two components. It is true that in one sense, Petrarch intended his exhortation to *otium* to serve as a continuation of a literal interpretation of *Ps.* 45:11 and the concept involves a sense that one should ‘take time’ to combat the dangers of worldly desire. Although this cannot be ignored, however, Petrarch’s analysis goes far beyond the literal sense of ‘vacate’ and the ‘activity’ appropriate to *otium* casts the notion in a definitively intellectual light. Since the remedy for the ‘snares of the world’ and the ‘lures of the flesh’ is based on a distinctive form of the *meditatio mortis*, the *otium* which Petrarch describes entails not a literal form of rest, but rather a state of being free from desire, of being free to exercise the reason necessary for salvation. This element of *otium*, bound up with the idea of living as a pilgrim in the body, is very clearly identifiable with an unobstructed intellectual capacity for the rational pursuit of virtue.

¹²³ *De otio*, II, 3: ‘Tale demum est universale platonicum illud in *Phaedrone* [sic], “nil aliud esse philosophiam nisi meditationem moriendi”: ubi due designantur mortes, altera nature, virtutis altera; quarum primam nec ullatenus arcessendam nec timendam, sed equo animo expectandam dicunt, secundam vero omni studio appetendam, quo genere moriendi vestri precipue usi sunt, voluptatum et cupidinum omnium obliti, ita viventes in corpore quasi iam membrorum ergastulo evasissent...’ Rotondi, p.65, ll. 15-21, quoting Plato, *Phaedro*, 67d.

¹²⁴ *De otio*, II, 3; Rotondi, 74, ll. 5-16. Petrarch also uses Scipio Africanus’ rebuke to Masinissa as an illustration of his point. While the language is striking and the example elegant, Scipio is a less satisfactory example to chose. Although Masinissa was a brave warrior who had achieved many noble things, Scipio quite properly believed that his bigamous marriage to Sophonisba (who was already married to Syphax) undid his other virtues and urged him to control himself. *De otio*, II, 3; Rotondi, 73, ll.10-76. c.f. *Africa*, V, 418-422.

¹²⁵ *De otio*, II, 5; Rotondi, 94, ll. 6-16, quoting Apuleius, *De deo Socratis*, 4.

6. All in the mind: the sources and meaning of *otium* in the *De otio religioso*

The preceding analysis has demonstrated that Petrarch's presentation of *otium* in the *De otio religioso* is more subtle than the rather literal English translation of the word might suggest. Conceived as an *otium negotiosum*, it was discussed as a respite from the Three Enemies of Man. It was defined in opposition to a traditional understanding of the 'wiles of demons', the 'lures of the flesh' and the 'snares of the world', and Petrarch's elaboration of the dangers posed by these Three Enemies made extensive use of imagery in moral treatises from the desert fathers to the fourteenth century. Firmly rooted in the context of patristic and monastic conceptions of sin and vice, *otium* had as its object the negation of obstacles to the apprehension of truth and involved not only experiential identification in reading, but also the substitution of reason for desire following a meditation on death.

In that the treatise offers a response to the Three Enemies of Man, the *De otio religioso* is located within a long tradition of Christian thought that continued to have great relevance for monastic life in the fourteenth century. This is clearly of relevance for Petrarch's understanding of leisure, but in that he used the distinctive Latin term '*otium*' and associated it with a specific set of productive activities, it appears to draw inspiration from the rich classical and monastic heritage of this concept and its analogues (*quies*, *vacatio* etc.). There are, indeed, numerous parallels to be drawn and, at the level of mere bibliography, it is telling that Petrarch was not only well acquainted with key classical and monastic texts, but was also prepared to exploit their general compatibility.¹²⁶ The first list of Petrarch's preferred reading, assembled several years before the composition of the *De otio religioso*, contained some of the most important works on *otium* by Latin moralists.¹²⁷ Cicero's works obviously constituted a significant corpus of information, but it is worth pointing out that the Senecan texts known to Petrarch – notably the *Epistolae ad Luciliam*, the *De tranquillitate animi*, the *De consolatione ad Polybium* and the *De brevitae vitae* – presented the concept in a far more systematic fashion. Direct quotations in the *De otio religioso* indicate that Petrarch was certainly prepared to mine this seam, with Cicero's works being named or quoted on no fewer than twenty-four occasions, and Seneca's writings on a further nine. By the same token, Petrarch was also familiar with the teachings of key figures in the monastic tradition. In addition to referring to a number of important personalities – such as St.

¹²⁶ On the conceptual continuity between the classical and monastic traditions, see J. Leclercq, *Otia monastica: Étude sur le vocabulaire de la contemplation au moyen âge*, Studia Anselmiana 51, (Rome, 1963), 13-62.

¹²⁷ Ullman, *Studies in the Italian Renaissance*, 117-37; de Nolhac, *Pétrarque et l'humanisme*, 2:115-25; R. Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship from 1300 to 1850* (Oxford, 1976), 10

Macarius, St. Gregory of Nazianzus, St. Maximus, St. Bruno and St. Bernard – Petrarch cites a range of Christian authorities on *otium*, and leans most heavily on Lactantius' *Divinae Institutiones* and St. Jerome's letters.¹²⁸ From his other writings, it is also apparent that he had also familiarised himself at the very least with the works of St. Gregory the Great¹²⁹ and St. Bernard¹³⁰ before the *De otio religioso* was completed.

The bibliographical evidence is mirrored by conceptual parallels. Like Petrarch, both Latin moralists and Christian theologians were adamant that *otium* was bound up with the establishment of an inner peace. As Ronald Witt has pointed out, Seneca's *otium* signified 'the way of life leading to spiritual enrichment.'¹³¹ In his letters, Seneca described worldly pleasures as a distraction from virtue.¹³² Being transient, temporal objects are meaningless when compared to the good, and he affirms that a conscious effort should be made to resist the 'goats' of worldly delights.¹³³ This is, Seneca believed, a relatively easy matter.¹³⁴ All that was required was a dedication to philosophical inquiry and a commitment to literary learning.¹³⁵ Throughout the letters, he describes exercise of reason and a devotion to study as necessary for the suppression of *voluptas* and fear.¹³⁶ When a man practiced these activities and banished contrary sentiments from his being, he achieved the wellbeing of his soul – *euthymia* – an internal metamorphosis which was, in turn, identifiable with a productive *otium*.¹³⁷

Seneca's view of *otium* as involving the establishment of inner peace through meditation and reading was repeated in those Christian writings which helped to shape the thought of the later Middle Ages. Although the term *otium* itself was most frequently used in a pejorative sense by writers drawing on the Latin Bible,¹³⁸ many works invest the associated concept of *vacatio* with the characteristics integral to Seneca's *otium*.¹³⁹ *Ps.* 45:11 was a pivotal text for this conceptual transition. In his *Moralia*, St. Gregory the Great used the verse to explain that the Sabbath was, in one sense, a purely interior concept, and went to

¹²⁸ Trinkaus, 'Humanist treatises', 19: '...even in book I, where the state of life and the conflicts within the monastery walls are the main stress of his sermonizing, he falls back mainly on the classical Christians for support – on Augustine, Lactantius, and Jerome.'

¹²⁹ e.g. *Fam.* X, 3 (scr. 25th September 1348)

¹³⁰ e.g. *Fam.* XVI, 8 (scr. 24th April 1353)

¹³¹ Witt, 'Introduction' to Schaerer, p.xii.

¹³² Seneca, *Ep.* lxxiv.

¹³³ Seneca, *Ep.* lxxxvii, Note that Seneca uses Posidonius' argument deliberately to contradict the view that it is not riches which transmit vice, but the agent who breeds it within himself through folly, *Ep.* lxxxvii, 30

¹³⁴ Seneca, *Ep.* lxxxvii, 1

¹³⁵ Seneca, *Ep.* lxxii, 5 ff.

¹³⁶ Seneca, *Ep.* lxxiv, 21; c.f. *Ep.* lxxiv, 16.

¹³⁷ e.g. Seneca, *De tranq. animi*, II, 3-5; *Ep.* xix.

¹³⁸ Leclercq, *Otia monastica*, 41. See also Vickers, 'Leisure and idleness', 107-111.

¹³⁹ Leclercq, *Otia monastica*, 42-9.

define it as a spiritual leisure (*vacatio*) devoted to the contemplation of God.¹⁴⁰ In an anonymous twelfth-century commentary, the crucial phrase *vacate et videte* was interpreted as an exhortation to rid the mind of everything that was contrary to the contemplation of God (desire, doubt etc.) and to establish peace in the heart.¹⁴¹ As St. Bernard argued, it was only through the nullification of worldly desires and the establishment of an *interna quies* that it was possible to participate in a 'union with the Father and the Son'.¹⁴² This entailed not merely a rigorous commitment to meditation on the divine and abstention from useless or vain thoughts, but also serious study of Scripture and of salutary texts.¹⁴³

There are obvious parallels to be drawn with the *De otio religioso* and its resonance with both the Senecan concept of *euthymia* and the monastic identification of *vacatio* with *quies mentis* need not be laboured. The comparison, however, cannot be sustained beyond this point. Although both classical and later Christian writers accorded *otium* or *vacatio* an interior dimension, each tradition associated this with specific physical practices in a manner that was entirely alien to the *De otio religioso*. As we have already seen, Seneca – along with Livy and Sallust – firmly believed that places could communicate vice. In his attack on the *luxuria* of Baiae, he argued that 'we ought to see to it that we flee to the greatest possible distance from provocations from vice'.¹⁴⁴ For Seneca, therefore, *otium* involved a very physical withdrawal from the world and from the *vita activa*. Although Seneca's writings on this point were often couched in a deliberately cautious fashion,¹⁴⁵ the monastic tradition which drew from his notion of *otium* expressed this notion of a *vita contemplativa* in a more ambitious and unambiguous manner. It is not necessary to review medieval monasticism in exhaustive detail, but it is valuable to point out that the injunction '*vacate et videte*' was accorded an ascetic meaning which more than matched its interior meaning. For another anonymous writer of the twelfth century, '*vacate et videte*' inferred not merely a respite from useless preoccupations, but also a rest from 'perverted action'.¹⁴⁶ Since thought and deed were linked, the excision of worldly desires entailed an aversion from the world itself. For the Cistercian Aelred of Rievaulx it was the absence of pointless labours, the absolute dedication to God, the disregard for the body and the communal existence which made the

¹⁴⁰ St. Gregory the Great, *Moralia*, V, 55; *P.L.* 76, col. 927.

¹⁴¹ J. Leclercq, *Analecta monastica*, I, Studia Anselminana, 20, (Rome, 1948), 98.

¹⁴² Leclercq, *Otia monastica*, 110; q.v. St. Bernard, *Pro dom. I Novem.*, 5, 2; *P.L.* 183, col. 354.

¹⁴³ e.g. St. Bernard, *Ep.* 78, 4; *P.L.* 182, col. 193; cited in Leclercq, *Otia monastica*, 132-3.

¹⁴⁴ Seneca, *Ep.* li, 5: 'Id agere debemus, ut irritamenta vitiorum quam longissime profugiamus.' trans. R. M. Gummere, (Cambridge MA, 1917).

¹⁴⁵ On the difficulties presented to the Stoic by *otium*, see Laidlaw, '*Otium*,' 48.

¹⁴⁶ *Dialogus de conflictu amoris Dei et linguae dolosae*, 'Alii vero sanctum habent Sabbatum, qui vacant et vident, quoniam Deus est, et non solum a perverso quiescunt opere, sed etiam, quantum possunt, quiescunt a vana meditatione.' *P.L.* 213, col. 858; quoted at Leclercq, *Otia monastica*, 105.

cloister the natural home of the one true leisure and the only place in which mental *vacatio* could properly be exercised.¹⁴⁷

This understanding of *otium* as a physical leisure was quite out of keeping with Petrarch's elaboration of the concept. As we have seen, Petrarch's *otium* was an intellectual response to affective obstructions to the truth. Physicality played no significant role in this: quite the opposite. The reading of Scripture and other salutary texts was an effective remedy for 'demonic' doubt and despair not because the physical process of study was conducive to virtue – as Cicero and Seneca had suggested – but because the personal process of identification could strengthen the reader's belief in his capacity to redeem himself. More importantly, the 'snares of the world' and the 'lures of the flesh' could be combated not by eremitic retreat, but by recognising the fallacy of looking for happiness in the transient. *Otium* becomes an acknowledgement of corporeal mortality and a recognition of the primacy of the rational in the context of grace.

Given the operative component of Petrarch's *otium* was so distinctively mental in character, it is perhaps unsurprising that he should also have broken with classical and monastic traditions in distancing the concept more clearly from physical seclusion. In the first book, he warns the monks of Montrieux against the view that particular surroundings can guard a person against vice. Implying that the Carthusian monks could fall prey to complacency in their cloistered environment, he delivers a stern warning. 'You should not infer that you are safe,' he thundered,

because you live in Christ's fortress; for although you campaign under the best leader, and your encampments are the strongest and best defended, no place should be thought to be entirely free from danger, with unsleeping and fierce enemies lying in wait and making noise on every side unless armed guards, vigorous in mind and body, keep watch on the rampart against the attacks and ambushes of the enemy.¹⁴⁸

Despite the exploitation of the imagery in this passage, it is evident that Petrarch did intend '*in castris Cristi*' and '*nullus ... locus*' to be understood in their literal and physical sense. The monks of Montrieux may have entered the monastery as soldiers of Christ and, separated from the world, may be in a positive location from which to defend themselves against doubt and *voluptas*, but they should not be deluded into thinking that their physical

¹⁴⁷ Aelred of Rievaulx, *Sermones inediti*, ed. C. H. Talbot, (Rome, 1952), 88, quoted in Leclercq, *Otia monastica*, 107.

¹⁴⁸ *De otio*, I, 3: 'Neque vero vos tutos arbitremini quia in castris Cristi agitis; quamvis enim sub optimo duce militetis et castra munitissima ac fortissima sint, nullus tamen locus ad plenum tutus extimandus est quem insomnes et feri hostes obsident atque circumsonant, nisi pro vallo excubent armati vigiles contra insultus insidiasque hostium animis atque corporibus intenti.' Rotondi, 14, ll. 20-25.

surroundings actually protected them. It is their devotion to Christ and their constant watchfulness against the *'insultus insidiasque hostium'*, rather than their cloistered environment which is their best defence against falsehoods.¹⁴⁹

To some degree, the form of interior peace to which *otium* pointed evokes the ἡσυχία sought by Evagrius and the desert fathers, struggling against ἀχθidia and πάθη, but Petrarch's development of the concept appears both to be a more specific response to the Three Enemies of Man and a more programmatically developed idea. A closer parallel can be found in the works of St. Augustine, who himself elaborated on many of the themes inspired by Greek philosophy assimilated by early Christian thought. Although Augustine's works in general do not display much evidence of his having responded directly to the classical tradition of *otium*,¹⁵⁰ his sermon on Ps. 45:11 nevertheless describes a form of productive leisure which discreetly continues Latin archetypes in a manner quite different from that of later Christian discussions of *vacatio*.¹⁵¹ Deconstructing the apparently simple Psalmic verse, Augustine explains that if man – whose power is so limited – is to be redeemed, he must see (*videre*) that it is through God alone that he will be reformed.¹⁵² The truth, however, is invisible when the mind is consumed by a 'struggling tumult'.¹⁵³ When it is said '*vacate et videte*' therefore, Augustine explains that what is meant is a *vacatio a contradictionibus* – a respite from the contradictions that cloud the mind achieved through conscious intellectual endeavour and used for the sake of the recognition of the truth.¹⁵⁴

It is not unreasonable to see Augustine's *vacatio* as a form of the *otium negotiosum* and it seems fair to suggest that he was indeed contributing – perhaps unconsciously – to a classical tradition of attributing positive value to productive leisure. Nevertheless, his understanding of *vacatiolotium* is self-evidently idiosyncratic and stands at a distance from the *otium negotiosum* advocated by those like Seneca.

¹⁴⁹ c.f. *De otio*, I, 3; Rotondi, 17, ll. 3-8, quoting *James* 4:7, 8.

¹⁵⁰ Hagendahl's study of St. Augustine's reaction to and use of the Latin classics does not reveal any serious reaction to the most important Roman descriptions of *otium*. I cannot find any evidence to suggest that Augustine attached any significance to discussions of *otium* in Cicero, Seneca, Cato, Livy, Sallust or Ennius. H. Hagendahl, *Augustine and the Latin Classics*, *Studia Graeca et Latina Gothoburgensia* XX:I, (Göthenburg, 1967).

¹⁵¹ Augustine, *Enarrationes in psalmos, I-L*, ed. D. E. Dekkers O.S.B and J. Fraipont, *Corpus Cristianorum*, Series Latina xxxviii, Aurelii Augustini Opera, Pars. X, 1, (Turnholt, 1956), xlv, 14. Gerosa briefly observes a parallel with the *Enarrationes in psalmos*, although he omits to follow the connection fully, and also draws attention to Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, XXII, 30; Gerosa, *Umanesimo cristiano del Petrarca*, 142-3.

¹⁵² Augustine, *En. in psalmos*, xlv, 14. That it is *through* God that man is to be redeemed, and not necessarily *actively by* God seems to be confirmed by the final words of the paragraph.

¹⁵³ *ibid.*: 'Hoc non videt tumultus contentiosus animi humani...'

¹⁵⁴ *ibid.*

Although Seneca's conception of the *otium negotiosum* involved the suppression of contrary desires for the attainment of intellectual solace, St. Augustine's *vacatio* was a more explicitly interior concept. Rather than seeing man as an actor 'goaded' to evil deeds by physical objects, Augustine portrays human beings as capable of confusing – and even 'blinding' – themselves with contradictions of mind. The implication of this distinction is significant. The explanatory exhortation '*reprimite animos vestros a contradictionibus*' which concludes the exegesis makes *vacatio* a personal resolution of an intellectual tension and refers the concept directly to the opposition between *voluptas* and *ratio* in relation to the truth. In the *De civitate Dei*, this is made more obvious. Discussing the law of the heavenly and earthly cities, Augustine explains that pure contemplation of the truth is impossible without peace. Peace, in turn, cannot be had without the suppression of animal desire and the supremacy of the rational soul.¹⁵⁵ When – in the *Enarrationes in psalmos* – Augustine urged his listeners to have peace in themselves by resolving the contradictions of their minds, he therefore communicates a sense that *vacatio* must necessarily involve the recognition of the futility of mortal things and the aspiration to rational existence. An observant reader, not overly troubled by issues of textual chronology, would have no difficulty in seeing the rather generalised exhortation of the *Enarrationes* as compatible with the moral theology of the *De vera religione* and the *Soliloquies*.¹⁵⁶

In direct contrast to the classical tradition and – to an extent – with later monastic thought, the 'active' component of Augustine's *vacatio* requires no reference to the physical world and, as such, is capable of sustaining translation into a highly flexible form of the *otium negotiosum*. Directed towards the extinction of *voluptas* and the exercise of reason, it required no concern be given to external reality beyond that which is necessary for a comfortable existence. Provided the inner tumults of the mind were stilled, it did not matter what a man's surroundings or occupation might be. Although there were different forms of living, Augustine did not seem to express a preference:

The dress or manner of life adopted by whoever embraces the faith that leads to God does not matter to the Heavenly City, provided that these things do not contravene the divine precepts. Hence when philosophers become Christians, they are required to change their false doctrines, but they are not compelled to change their dress or their customary mode of life, for these are not an impediment to religion. Thus, the behaviour which Varro noted as a defining characteristic of the Cynics does not matter in the least, provided that there is nothing indecent or immoderate about it. As for the three kinds of life – the life

¹⁵⁵ Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, XIX, 14.

¹⁵⁶ Augustine's sermon on Ps. 45 was composed in 412, some twenty-six years after the *Soliloquies* and about twenty-one years after the *De vera religione* was completed. D. E. Dekkers and J. Fraipont, 'Tabula Chronologica' in Augustine, *En. in psalmos*, xv-xviii; P. Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, new ed. (London, 2000), 64-68.

of leisure, the life of action, and the combination of both, a Christian might conduct his life in any of these ways and still attain to everlasting rewards, provided that he does so without prejudice to his faith. And it is, of course, important also that he loves the truth and performs the duties of charity.¹⁵⁷

Although *vacatio* was necessary for the perception of the truth, the attainment of virtue was not conditional on a physical withdrawal from the world. The intellectual dimension was of primary importance. In a passage from the *De vera religione* which Petrarch quoted with great approval towards the end of the first book of the *De otio religioso*, Augustine further glosses '*vacate et videte*'. 'Do not strive against being accustomed to material things,' he says,

Conquer that habit and you are victorious over all. We seek unity, the simplest thing of all. Therefore let us seek it in simplicity of heart. 'Take time and know that I am God.' This [leisure] is not the stillness of idleness but of thought, free from space and time. Swelling, fleeting phantasms do not permit us to see abiding unity. Space offers us something to love, but time steals away what we love and leaves the soul crowds of phantasms which incite desire for this or that. Thus the mind becomes restless and unhappy, vainly trying to hold that by which it is held captive. It is summoned to stillness so that it may not love the things which cannot be loved without toil. So it will master them and not be held by them.¹⁵⁸

Petrarch's description of the manner in which the 'wiles of demons', the 'snares of the world' and the 'lures of the flesh' are overcome continues themes present in Christian moral treatises from the desert fathers to the fourteenth century, but is nevertheless located within the context of St. Augustine's understanding of the relationship between *voluptas* and *ratio*. As such, despite the literary connotations and heritage of the term, Petrarch's *otium* stands in close relation to Augustine's development of *vacatio*. Uniquely like Augustine, Petrarch's

¹⁵⁷ Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, XIX, 19: 'Nihil sane ad istam pertinet civitatem quo habitu vel more vivendi, si non est contra divina praecepta, istam fidem, qua pervenitur ad Deum, quisque sectetur; unde ipsos quoque philosophos, quando Christiani fiunt, non habitum vel consuetudinem victus, quae nihil impedit religionem, sed falsa dogmata mutare compellit. Unde illam quam Varro adhibuit ex Cynicis differentiam, si nihil turpiter atque intemperanter agat, omnino non curat. Ex tribus vero illis vitae generibus, otioso, actuoso et ex utroque composito, quamvis salva fide quisque possit in quolibet eorum vitam ducere et ad sempiterna praemia pervenire, interest tamen quid amore teneat veritatis, quid officio caritatis impendat.' trans. from Augustine, *The City of God against the Pagans*, ed. and trans. R. W. Dyson, (Cambridge, 1998), 948.

¹⁵⁸ Augustine, *De vera religione*, xxxv, 65; trans. Burleigh, 258. Petrarch quotes this passage from the *De vera religione* in his discussion of 'demonic' doubt which obviously evokes the spirit of the *Enarrationes in psalmos: De otio*, I, 7; Rotondi, 43, ll.11-13, quoting St. Augustine, *De vera religione*, xxxv, 65. His awareness of the overlap between the two works seems palpable, particularly since it ultimately serves as a continuation of an Augustinian gloss on '*vacate et videte*'. Vickers, 'Leisure and idleness,' 113, notes the link to the *De vera religione*, but omits to connect the text with the *Enarrationes in psalmos*.

otium is founded in the mind. Its operative components – evocative of the young saint’s moral theology – are based on the suppression of *voluptas* and the supremacy of rational endeavour in the context of grace. As in the *De civitate Dei* and the *De vera religione*, Petrarch uses these active elements to strip his *otium* of any physical associations: by virtue of his emphasis on intellectual endeavour, *otium* loses its literal sense of leisure and instead becomes an interior form of peace.¹⁵⁹

It is Petrarch’s dual insistence on the intellectual activities proper to *otium* and the concept’s lack of physical meaning which marks him out most clearly as having been influenced by St. Augustine, and his acceptance of the *Enarrationes in psalmos* as the surest guide to the Davidic verses in a letter to Boccaccio seems to add further weight to this argument.¹⁶⁰ Although his use of the word *otium* and manipulation of the connotations of productive leisure are reflective of the spirit of the classical tradition, his description of it as an interior condition dependent on experiential identification, the *meditatio mortis* and the role of reason places the *De otio religioso* at some distance from classical Latin archetypes. By the same token, the notion of *otium* also stands at some remove from the monastic tradition. While *otium* is defined as a response to the Three Enemies of Man, and the *De otio religioso* ostensibly addresses the leisure he had witnessed at the monastery of Montrieux, his exhortation to live as a pilgrim in the body marks the furthest limit of his direct absorption of monastic writings on *otium*. He was certainly prepared to draw support from the lives and works of holy men such as St. Bernard, but the interior nature of Petrarch’s *otium* precluded him from using the concept to draw a necessary connection between the exercise of *otium* and the regulated seclusion of a cloistered life, or with the manual labour conventionally prescribed as a remedy for *otium otiosum*.¹⁶¹

Whereas some scholars like Kristeller, Trinkaus, Lokay, Seidlmeyer and Constable have viewed the *De otio religioso* as a comment on the monastic life which either idealises or excoriates a cloistered existence, this impression of *otium* casts the text in a different light. Although there are indeed grounds for seeing the text as a reflection on the status of the

¹⁵⁹ A further instance on which this interpretation of Petrarchan *otium* is suggested appears during the discussion of demonic doubt. Shortly after Petrarch first warns the monks of Montrieux against complacency, he reminds them once again of the universality of the ‘fragile warfare of life’. This leads him to question whether it is, in fact, profitable for the monks to have a literal ‘*quies*’ and to believe that they are without an enemy. Although it would be difficult to offer too strident an interpretation on the basis of a relatively short passage, it appears that *otium* can be had even when surrounded by the objects of all corporeal desires. Indeed, there is the suggestion that *otium* is almost better where it is enjoyed surrounded obviously by the danger of the passions. *De otio*, I, 3; Rotondi, 20, ll. 19-24.

¹⁶⁰ *Fam.* XVIII, 3.

¹⁶¹ Leclercq, *Otia monastica*, 37-40; H. J. Sieben, ‘Quies’ et ‘Otium’ in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité ascétique, mystique, doctrine et histoire* (Paris, 1985), 12: 2748-51.

religious, Petrarch's description of an interior, intellectual *otium* explores a facet of moral living which may be shared by both the secular and the religious life, and which transcended the confines of the cloister. Called forth by a visit to the monastery at Montrieux, the *De otio religioso* nevertheless presented a form of active leisure based on identification, the *meditatio mortis* and reason in the context of grace which could be applied in all walks of life. Basing his concept of *otium* on Augustine's *vacatio*, Petrarch explored linguistic and conceptual similarities between the classical and monastic traditions to produce a text which – while of great relevance to the monastic life – was able to serve as a model for virtuous living applicable even to those who, like him, inhabited the secular realm.

7. The *De otio religioso* and the *Secretum*

Although the *De otio religioso* is framed around the traditional motif of the Three Enemies of Man and makes use of a radically different style, it is notable that the treatise appears to correspond well with the early-Augustinian advice dispensed by Augustinus in the *Secretum*. The similarity between the moral preoccupations of the two texts need not be laboured. Despite each making use of different constructions of the seven deadly sins, both the *Secretum* and the *De otio religioso* deal with the opposition of *voluptas* and *virtus* and engage with the problem by concentrating on the perception of the truth. Whereas Augustinus treats the seven deadly sins in turn in the *Secretum*, laying particular emphasis on *accidia*, love and the desire for glory, Petrarch uses three broad groups to describe the same vices in the *De otio religioso* and, following an established medieval tradition, continues to place considerable emphasis on despair while associating the totality with the obstruction of truth. Each text expresses confidence that the divine truth can be perceived using reason and is unambiguous in its certainty of man's capacity for redemption, but laments the fact that men can deceive themselves so readily.

The moral programmes which the two texts propound are similarly related. As in the *Secretum*, Petrarch's remedy for the 'snares of the world' and the 'lures of the flesh' is based on a recognition of corporeal mortality. Once a person has recognised that an adherence to the transient not only leads him further away from *felicitas*, but also puts him at a distance from his distinctive humanity, he will naturally wish to pursue the eternal and exercise his unique capacity for rational endeavour. While the *De otio religioso*'s emphasis on salutary reading is not matched by similarly explicit statements in the *Secretum*, the means by which 'demonic' despair may be combated is clearly related to the role of reading presupposed by

the dialogue and persuasively analysed by Victoria Kahn and Carol Quillen.¹⁶² In the same way as Augustinus invites Franciscus to identify with him as an author, and just as the dialogue itself is intended to educate a particular moral state, so the *De otio religioso* invests the practice of reading with an intellectual meaning.

The parallelism of the *Secretum* and the *De otio religioso* seems to illustrate that *otium* itself was employed to denote the moral condition which the dialogue was intended to inculcate, and which Augustinus himself briefly describes as an ideal to which Franciscus should aspire. Sharing an identical moral philosophy, derived from St. Augustine's works and cloaked by allusions to classical, patristic and medieval traditions, the *Secretum* and the *De otio religioso* appear to point towards the cultivation of a particular form of interior peace. In each case, the idea of an inner peace appears as the extension of an early-Augustinian understanding of *felicitas* and *virtus*, and has a series of distinct characteristics. As a form of activity, each text describes a form of *otium* which involves the negation of deleterious desires through salutary reading, a meditation on mortality and the exercise of reason. No substantial significance is accorded to place or occupation in either text. As a condition, *otium* appears not so much as a means of describing a contemplative or eremitic existence, but rather as a manner of expressing a *mens quieta*, an unburdened mind free from the distractions and troubles of the world.

¹⁶² Kahn, 'The Figure of the Reader'; Quillen, *Rereading the Renaissance*.

The hidden life of solitude

1. Solitude and the *vita contemplativa*

Begun no more than a year later, the *De otio religioso* was composed as a companion-piece to the *De vita solitaria*.¹ Addressing the monks of Montrieux, Petrarch pointed out that the *De otio religioso* was related to the *De vita solitaria* both in subject and style. Describing the mode of living appropriate to the man who would be virtuous, the two texts were, he claimed, intended to demonstrate that 'it is the mark of mortal madness which rejoices more in labour than in the fruits of labour.'²

The congruence of the *De vita solitaria* and the *De otio religioso* is sustained by the apparent interchangeability of the terms '*otium*' and '*solitudo*' in the two works. As in both the *Rerum memorandarum libri* and the *Invective contra medicum*, '*otium*' and '*solitudo*' are used almost synonymously throughout the *De vita solitaria*, and the impression of a shared semantic space is implicit in the use of both '*solitarius*' and '*otiosus*' to describe the man who is free from *occupationes* in the first book.³ Indeed, '*otium*' and its derivatives appear

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¹ For the dating and composition of the *De vita solitaria*, see B. L. Ullman, 'The composition of Petrarch's *De vita solitaria* and the history of the Vatican manuscript,' *Miscellanea Giovanni Mercati*, 4, *Letteratura classica e umanistica*, Studi e testi 195, (Vatican City, 1946), 107-42; A. Avena, 'La composizione del trattato *De vita solitaria*,' *Rivista critica della letteratura italiana* 12 (1907): 193-202; G. Martellotti, 'Nota critica al testo del *De vita solitaria*,' in *Prose*, 1166-8. Latin text for the *De vita solitaria*, ed. G. Martellotti, *Prose*, 286-593; English translation, *Life of Solitude*, trans. J. Zeitlin, (Illinois, 1924). In what follows, references to the *De vita solitaria* will indicate the relevant portion of text according to Jacob Zeitlin's translation (Z), according to the division of the work by Guido Martellotti in *Prose* (P), and according to the page number in the *Prose* edition (*Prose*). For comment on Zeitlin's translation, see O. Shepard, 'Review of *Petrarch's Life of Solitude* by Jacob Zeitlin,' *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 24 (1925): 560-74. All translations are my own, unless otherwise stated.

² *De otio religioso*, I, 1: 'Sileo que sequuntur, nam et ea me scripsisse recolo in eo libro, quem huic et materia et stilo valde cognatum *de solitaria vita* nuper edidi, qui hunc et tempore, sic serie rerum preit, et omnia ad unum tendunt, ad notam scilicet mortalis insanie magis labore gaudentibus quam laboris fructu.' Rotondi, 6, ll.27-32. c.f. *De otio religioso*, I, 8: 'Non est animus nominatim hic reliquos attingere, quorum nomina satis in secundam *Solitarie vite* partem congegisse videor.' Rotondi, 48, l.34 – 49, l.1.

³ e.g. *De vita solitaria*, Z I, ii, 1; P I, ii; *Prose*, 302; Z I, iii, 1; P I, iii; *Prose*, 318.

on more than eighty occasions in the *De vita solitaria* and are, in fact, employed more extensively than in the *De otio religioso*. Similarly, the implication of conceptual co-dependence is latent in Petrarch's use of '*solitudo*' to introduce his theme in the first book of the *De otio religioso*.⁴

Like *otium*, *solitudo* has virtue as its object in the *De vita solitaria*. For Umberto Bosco, solitude was 'the "vestibule" of all virtue',⁵ while for Arnaud Tripet, it was 'the condition of all virtuous ways'.⁶ Although Petrarch used '*otium*' to denote an intellectual freedom from desire and despair, however, scholars viewed '*solitudo*' as more closely connected with the pursuit of a peaceful retirement in the countryside dedicated to study in the company of a select group of friends.⁷ Rather than being a continuation of the Augustinian idea of *vacatio*, solitude is commonly interpreted as a humanistic development of the classical notion of a *vita contemplativa*, defined in opposition to the active engagement in civic life, a *vita activa*.

In the introduction to his translation of the *De vita solitaria*, Jacob Zeitlin argued that Petrarch abhorred the city and longed for the innocence of the countryside, in a manner reminiscent of Horace's *Satires*.⁸ Far from the hateful mob, Zeitlin suggests, Petrarch held that a man might find peace and virtue on the verdant banks of a rolling stream and, surrounded by oaks and beeches, find happiness.⁹ This distance from the vice of the city, however, did not equate to isolation from friends. Zeitlin contends that Petrarch – like Cicero – seems to have had a horror for that lonely form of solitude and felt that a few good-hearted friends could contribute as much to the attainment of virtue as the separation from vulgar hordes and the vicious goads of the city.¹⁰ Among good people, Zeitlin argues, Petrarch believed a man could move more readily towards the good. The same appears to have been true of the company of books and the anticipated society of readership.¹¹ As Zeitlin points out, Petrarch openly shares Seneca's view that solitude without literary endeavour would be like a living death.¹² Separate from all the distractions of public life, a man could follow the

⁴ *De otio religioso*, I, 1; Rotondi, 2, ll. 7-10.

⁵ U. Bosco, *Petrarca*, (Bari, 1961), 109.

⁶ A. Tripet, *Pétrarque ou la connaissance de soi*, Travaux d'humanisme et Renaissance XCI, (Geneva, 1967), 41 ; c.f. Constable, 'Petrarch and Monasticism,' 63.

⁷ J. Zeitlin, 'Introduction,' in *Life of Solitude*, trans. Zeitlin, 55.

⁸ Zeitlin, 'Introduction', 55-7; Tripet, *Pétrarque ou la connaissance de soi*, 49. c.f. Horace, *Sat.* II, 6. On this satire and its Epicurean associations see, for example, N. Rudd, *The Satires of Horace*, (London, 1994), 243-257, esp. 250-1.

⁹ See also Tripet, *Pétrarque ou la connaissance de soi*, 49.

¹⁰ Zeitlin, 'Introduction', 62; Wilkins, *Life of Petrarch*, 54; Bosco, *Petrarca*, 110.

¹¹ Literary endeavour and companionship are treated as equivalent in Bosco's study of Petrarch's life and it is interesting that they are seen as being facilitated solely by distance from the city and attendant impediments. Bosco, *Petrarca*, 110-11.

¹² Seneca, *Ep.* lxxxii, 4.

Stoic philosopher in learning much from reading improving works and writing texts of great value to humanity. By the same token, he could emulate Virgil in presenting the countryside as the perfect setting for the *vita contemplativa* and the ideal environment for poetic composition.¹³

In Zeitlin's view, Petrarch's conception of *solitudo* is derived entirely from classical archetypes. There is, in Zeitlin's opinion, 'scarcely a trace' of 'Christian mysticism' in the *De vita solitaria* and Petrarch's image of rural seclusion could well be described as 'un-Christian'.¹⁴ Indeed, even in treating the 'Christian votaries of the solitary life' in the second book, Zeitlin argued that Petrarch actually betrays a distaste for the practices of his 'monkish heroes' and reveals a secular and Horatian preference for 'the avoidance of slovenliness and boorishness, and for the middle course in all things.'¹⁵ Although approaching the text from a somewhat different perspective, Tripet similarly affirms that Petrarch's *solitudo* was in all significant respects modelled after the classical idea of a *vita contemplativa*, and most closely resembled aspects of Stoic and Epicurean philosophy.¹⁶

Since the publication of Zeitlin's translation, many scholars have come to question the degree to which Petrarch neglected patristic and monastic thought in the *De vita solitaria*, and have drawn attention to the compatibility of classical and Christian traditions. Although expressing himself rather tentatively, Guido Martellotti pointed to the concord achieved between competing 'pagan' and Christian strands in the text.¹⁷ Developing this view further, Giles Constable has suggested that the classical images deployed in the *De vita solitaria* were manipulated in such a way that they actually supported a monastic view of solitude.¹⁸ Similarly, Charles Trinkaus has contended that Petrarch's apparent predilection for Stoic and Epicurean thought was not incompatible with either monastic writings or with a celebration of the life of the religious.¹⁹ Pursuing a similar line of argument (although writing some time before Martellotti, Trinkaus and Constable), Bosco not merely suggested that Petrarch's Stoic and Epicurean references were compatible with Christian theology, but also attempted to forge a link with the exhortation '*vacate et videte*' in the *De otio religioso* by suggesting somewhat clumsily that there is a parallel between the bucolic virtue of classical philosophy and the apprehension of divine knowledge.²⁰

¹³ M. O'Rourke Boyle, *Petrarch's Genius. Penitence and Prophecy* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and Oxford, 1991), 44-73, esp. 44-53.

¹⁴ Zeitlin, 'Introduction', 57.

¹⁵ *ibid.*, 64.

¹⁶ Tripet, *Pétrarque ou la connaissance de soi*, 49.

¹⁷ G. Martellotti, 'Introduzione,' in *Prose*, vii-xxii, here xv.

¹⁸ Constable, 'Petrarch and Monasticism,' 63-4.

¹⁹ Trinkaus, 'Humanist Treatises,' 19-20; *The Poet as Philosopher*, 84-9.

²⁰ Bosco, *Petrarca*, 110.

Despite the parallels which have been drawn between the *De vita solitaria* and monastic thought, Fritz Schalk has nevertheless accurately summarised consensus in arguing that the Christian content of Petrarch's *solitudo* is subordinate to its more direct Stoic and Epicurean inspiration.²¹ There may be parallels which can be observed between Petrarch's solitude and monastic – and even Augustinian²² – thought, but it is generally agreed that the *De vita solitaria*'s emphasis on rural seclusion, the company of friends and the literary endeavour marks it out as having been composed primarily under the influence of Stoic and Epicurean thought. Solitude, it is held, is conceived in direct imitation of a classical *vita contemplativa*, overlaid with the admiration of the countryside and hatred of the city which characterised the moralising satires of the Lucilian tradition.²³ As such, regardless of Petrarch's intention that the two texts should be complementary, there appears to be a significant gap between the *otium* we have observed in the *De otio religioso* and the solitude of the *De vita solitaria*.

2. Stoic and Epicurean themes in Petrarch's *solitudo*: the background of the *De vita solitaria*

There is, indeed, much to recommend the suggestion that the classical notion of a *vita contemplativa* provided the inspiration for Petrarch's conception of *solitudo* in the *De vita solitaria*. With the slight exception of Cicero's notion of the ideal statesman,²⁴ Stoic and Epicureans during the late Roman Republic and early Empire were united in advocating the pursuit of a *vita contemplativa* – dedicated to friendship and philosophy – in preference to a *vita activa* – devoted to *negotium* and *occupationes*.

For the Epicureans, it was fruitless to look for security in public affairs.²⁵ Since the quest for public acclaim and civic prominence required men to depend on others from whom no loyalty could be expected, an active life in the city – vulnerable to the fickleness of fate – was fraught with worry and fear.²⁶ Although Juvenal distanced himself from Epicureanism in

²¹ F. Schalk, 'Zu Petrarca's «De vita solitaria» (Buch II),' in G. Billanovich and G. Frasso, ed., *Il Petrarca ad Arquà. Atti del Convegno di Studi nel VI Centenario (1370-1374)* (Padua, 1975), 257-68, here, 261.

²² q.v. for example, Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, VIII, 4; *Contra Faustum*, XXII, 52.

²³ For a useful introduction to the Lucilian tradition of satire, see M. Coffey, *Roman Satire*, 2nd ed., (London, 1989), 35-148.

²⁴ Cicero, *De re publica*, I, vi, 11; I, viii, 13; I, ix, 14f.

²⁵ Diogenes Laertius, X, 143, xiv; c.f. Plutarch, *Moralia*, XIV, lxxv.

²⁶ Ammianus Marcellinus, XXX, iv, 3.

Sat. XIII,²⁷ Umbricius' complaints about the corruption and disrepute of Rome in *Sat.* III²⁸ and the invective against the ambition and avarice of the city in *Sat.* X are reflective of this strand of Epicurean thought.²⁹ Faced with the uncertainties and vices of the city, it was far better for the Epicurean to withdraw to the countryside.³⁰ There, a man could dedicate himself to philosophy and could cultivate strong friendships in a beautiful and peaceful environment where fear and concern would have no place.³¹ Through philosophy, which allows him to minimise the influence of the body, he could understand how little he really needs, learn how to enjoy what he has, and to free himself from the fear of loss.³² In friendship, he could find the only secure form of human contact and great pleasure.³³

For the later Stoics who placed great emphasis on the exercise of 'muscular' virtues and the doctrine of the will, such a line of reasoning was understandably anathema,³⁴ but the attraction of a *vita contemplativa* was still regarded as valid. Having decried the deleterious effects of towns like Baiae in his letters,³⁵ Seneca recommended a solitary life of study³⁶ initially on the grounds that it was the surest means of remaining focussed on virtue.³⁷ Only when all *occupationes* had been cast aside, and the depraved ways of the town left behind did Seneca believe that it would be possible for a man to engage freely in the philosophical enquiry which would lead to wisdom and virtue.³⁸ Away from the thronging crowd, exercising moderation and continence,³⁹ and in the company of books and good friends, a man could come to understand the concatenation of all creation, and hence know both the good and the fallacy of fearing death. Conscious that critics might accuse him of diverging from the path of virtue and duty laid down by Zeno and Chrysippus,⁴⁰ however, he added that the solitary man's philosophical inquiries could be of benefit to the whole of humanity and thus be seen as a dutiful parallel to participation in public affairs.⁴¹ Surrounded by the

²⁷ Juvenal, *Sat.* XIII, 121-3. For an interesting and useful discussion of this point, see G. Highet, 'The Philosophy of Juvenal,' *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 80 (1949): 254-70.

²⁸ Juvenal, *Sat.* III, 164-231.

²⁹ Juvenal, *Sat.* X, 12-27, 56-113.

³⁰ Diogenes Laertius, X, 143, xiv.

³¹ Martial, *Epigrams*, I, lxxxvi, ll.8-10; II, xc; II, liii, ll.3-10.

³² Seneca, *Ep.* viii, 7.

³³ Cicero, *De finibus*, I, xx, 67-70; Seneca, *Ep.* ix, 8-9.

³⁴ e.g. Cicero, *De re publica*, I, vi, 10-11.

³⁵ e.g. Seneca, *Ep.* li.

³⁶ Seneca, *De otio*, I, 1.

³⁷ Seneca, *De otio*, I, 1. See also *Ep.* viii, 7-8, in which the overlap between Stoic and Epicurean thought is evident, although Seneca's divergence is also made plain.

³⁸ Seneca, *Ep.* lxxii, 3; liii, 9. On the sometimes vague relationship between wisdom and virtue, see, for example, Seneca, *Ep.* lxxxix, 7-8.

³⁹ e.g. Seneca, *Ep.* xvii, 3-5; xviii, 2-7, 9-11.

⁴⁰ Seneca, *De otio*, II, 1.

⁴¹ *ibid.*, IV, 1-2.

peace of the countryside, a wise man could not only be free of the distractions of vice, but could also serve the wider human community.

Petrarch's description of the circumstances in which the *De vita solitaria* was composed, and his treatment of solitude in some of his letters and metrical epistles from the same period are apparently redolent of Stoic and Epicurean thought.⁴² Seemingly framed around a contrast between the vice and instability of the city, and the peace of rural seclusion in the company of books and friends, the image of solitude which emerges appears to reproduce many of the features of the *vita contemplativa* common to these two philosophical schools.

The prefatory letter to Philippe de Cabassoles indicates that the *De vita solitaria* was intended to celebrate the solitude which Petrarch and the Bishop of Cavaillon had enjoyed together at Vaucluse in early 1346.⁴³ Although few details of the visit are given in the text, an insight into Petrarch's apprehension of that solitude is provided by a metrical epistle – the *Exul ab Italia*⁴⁴ – sent to Philippe apparently by way of invitation in the January of that year.⁴⁵ The contrast between city and countryside is immediately made apparent. In the opening lines, Petrarch reveals that he had come to Vaucluse '*partimque volens, partimque coactus*', having been driven out of Italy by '*furiis civilibus*' in Parma.⁴⁶ Despite the proximity of Avignon, he found the Provençal valley a delightful refuge.⁴⁷ In Vaucluse, he claims, are sylvan glades, streams and all the leisure of the countryside.⁴⁸ Everything a man could need can be found near the source of the Sorgue. Neither conflict nor the confusions of

⁴² For an interesting introduction to Petrarch's own pursuit of the life of solitude, see J. Petrie, 'Petrarch *solitarius*,' in M. McLaughlin, L. Panizza and P. Hainsworth, eds., *Petrarch in Britain. Interpreters, Imitators and Translators over 700 Years*, Proceedings of the British Academy 146, (Oxford, 2007), 29-38.

⁴³ *De vita solitaria*, 'Ad Philippum Cavallicensem Episcopum': 'solitarie scilicet otioseque vite preconium, quam cum sepe olim solus, tum precipue nuper mecum brevi quidem nec nisi dierum quindecim spatio degustasti.' *Prose*, 290-92.

⁴⁴ *Ep. Met. Var.* 3; text in *Poesie minori del Petrarca*, ed. D. Rossetti, 3 vols. (Milan, 1829-1834), 2: 60-6. Rossetti erroneously numbers it *Ep. Met.* I, 6 on the basis of the editions of 1554 and 1581. There is a readable English translation in *Petrarch at Vaucluse: Letters in Verse and Prose*, trans. E. H. Wilkins, (Chicago, 1958), 179ff.

⁴⁵ On the dating of the *Exul ab Italia*, see E. H. Wilkins, 'Petrarch's *Exul ab Italia*,' *Speculum* 38/3 (July, 1963): 453-460. See also E. H. Wilkins, *The "Epistolae Metricae" of Petrarch: A Manual*, Studi Eruditi, 8, (Rome, 1956), 12, 16.

⁴⁶ On 23rd February 1345, Petrarch had fled from Parma. The city, the lordship of which Azzo da Correggio had recently sold to Obizzo d'Este, was at that time besieged by the forces of the envious Marquis of Mantua and the Visconti. Faced with mounting civic unrest, Petrarch feared for his safety, partly due to his friendship with Azzo. Wilkins, 'Petrarch's *Exul ab Italia*', 453-4, 457-8. c.f. *Fam.* V, 10.

⁴⁷ *Ep. Met. Var.* 3, ll. 1-2.

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, 1.3.

a lawsuit disturb the peace which even the weary Muses had seen fit to enjoy.⁴⁹ At Vacluse, loyal friends are all that Petrarch lacked.⁵⁰

The beginning of the *Exul ab Italia* has echoes of Propertius,⁵¹ but appears most strongly to recall Horace, *Sat.* II, 6 and, pregnant with the suggestion of a comparison between Petrarch's house at Vacluse and the satirist's desires, seems to hint strongly that the solitude which inspired the *De vita solitaria* was conceived as a classical *vita contemplativa*. Petrarch has what Horace always wished for – a house near the source of a perennial stream, close to a little woodland⁵² – and it is striking that, like the country mouse in the fable,⁵³ he is content to be away from the insidious life of the city. His fare is simple – recalling the dinner offered to the town mouse⁵⁴ – but, as we have seen, he has everything that he needs to live comfortably. In the company of the Muses (which indicates the importance of literary endeavour to this rural retreat) he is free from ambition⁵⁵ and wants for nothing except the companionship of a good friend, a deficiency which he hoped would soon be remedied.

Petrarch almost seems to present himself as the fulfilment of Horace's ideal⁵⁶ and this appears to add weight to the sense of parallelism between solitude and the *vita contemplativa*. Although Horace and Petrarch each removed themselves 'from the city to a mountain citadel',⁵⁷ Petrarch has the sense not to ask for anything beyond the presence of a friend. Unlike Horace, he does not ask for his livestock to be fattened and does not invite the gods to protect him against change.⁵⁸ Since he has no wish to return to the city, he has no

⁴⁹ *ibid.*, ll. 8-14.

⁵⁰ *ibid.*, l. 4: 'Sed fidi comites absunt vultusque sereni'.

⁵¹ Jennifer Petrie has drawn attention to Propertius' dream that he 'lived on Mount Helicon, and was led by Apollo to a cave where the Muses taught him his vocation as a love poet.' Propertius, II, xiii, 3-4; III, v, 19-20. J. Petrie, *Petrarch: The Augustan Poets, the Italian Tradition and the Canzoniere* (Dublin, 1983), 88. It seems, however, that the emphasis on material satisfaction present in the *Exul ab Italia* is absent from Propertius and the parallel is somewhat imperfect. For Petrarch's knowledge of Propertius, unusual for the fourteenth century, see de Nolhac, *Pétrarque et l'humanisme*, I: 170-3; B. L. Ullman, 'The Manuscripts of Propertius,' *Classical Philology*, 6/3, (July 1911): 282-301; E. H. Wilkins, 'Notes on Petrarch', *MLN* 32/4 (1917): 193-200, esp. 193-96. It is interesting to note that Petrarch regarded Propertius as one of the four great love poets of Antiquity (alongside Catullus, Tibullus and Ovid), on which see *Fam.* IX, 4; *Trionfo d'amore*, IV, 19-24; *De remediis utriusque fortune*, I, 69.

⁵² Horace, *Sat.* II, 6, 1-3.

⁵³ *ibid.*, 115-117.

⁵⁴ *ibid.*, 83-89.

⁵⁵ *Ep. Met. Var.* 3, ll. 8-10; c.f. Horace, *Sat.* II, 6, l.18.

⁵⁶ c.f. The relationship between Horace's country mouse and the 'nagging remorse' of Lucretius' lover. Rudd, *The Satires of Horace*, 251; Lucretius, *De rerum natura*, 4.1131ff.

⁵⁷ Horace, *Sat.* II, 6, 16.

⁵⁸ *ibid.*, 13-15.

reason to sigh for the countryside or wonder when he will have the opportunity to be among his books again.⁵⁹

The contrast between *rus* and *urbs* so important to Stoic and Epicurean notions of the *vita contemplativa* is similarly visible in other letters written during the composition of the *De vita solitaria*. In a letter written on 15th February 1353, for example, Petrarch invited Niccolò di Paolo dei Vetuli, Bishop of Viterbo to join him and Socrates [Ludwig van Kempen] in Vacluse and, as in the earlier metrical epistle to Philippe de Cabassoles, uses the most vivid images to describe the solitude into which the prelate would be welcomed. 'I know of nothing,' Petrarch wrote towards the end of the letter,

which can compare to this solitude, in which our Socrates and I are most eagerly awaiting you. Supported by divine labour, you will easily be able to reinvigorate your body and clear your mind. For here there is no threatening tyrant and no intemperate citizenry; [you will not find] the biting language of a frenzied detractor, nor anger, nor a faction of citizens, nor complaints, nor traps, nor noise, nor the clamour of men, nor the din of crowds, nor the rumpus of lovers; what is more, [there is] no avarice, no envy, absolutely no ambition, no home for pride to be approached with fear; [there is] but joy, simplicity, freedom, and the happy state between wealth and poverty; [there is] but sober, humble and gentle rusticity, a harmless people, an unarmed peasantry, a pacific region, the bishop of which [Philippe de Cabassoles] – the best of men, a true friend to good people – will have you as a brother, since he has us as sons.⁶⁰

Here, solitude is free from the fearful tribulations, worrisome divisions and unpleasant noises of the city. Far from the avarice, envy, ambition and pride which stalk urban streets, Petrarch and Ludwig van Kempen enjoy peace and happiness by following a moderate and humble way of life in each other's company. Their rectitude is associated with and reflected by the simplicity of their rustic existence.

In a letter written to Guido Sette from San Columbano on 21st October 1353, Petrarch developed the contrast between *rus* and *urbs* yet further.⁶¹ The beauty of his surroundings put him in mind of Vacluse and, sustaining the parallel, he juxtaposes the

⁵⁹ *ibid.*, 60-62.

⁶⁰ *Fam.* XVI, 6, 20-22: 'nichil quod sciam, posse nunc cum hac solitudine comparari, in qua te Socrates noster et ego cupidissime expectamus, ubi facile divina ope suffultus et corpus recreare et serenare animum queas. Nullus hic tyrannus minax, nullus civis insolens; non obtreptatoris rabidi lingua mordacior, non ira, non civilis factio, non querimonie, non insidie, non clamor, non strepitus hominum, non tubarum clangor, non fragor armorum; nulla preterea avaritia, nullus livor, nulla prorsus ambitio, nullum superbi limen cum tremore subeundum; sed gaudium et simplicitas et libertas et inter divitias pauperiemque status optabilis; sed sobria et humilis et mansueta rusticitas, gens innocua, plebs inermis, regio pacifica, cuius presul vir optimus et bonorum amicissimus consequens erit ut te in fratrem habeat, quoniam nos habet in filios.' c.f. *Fam.* VI, 3 written to Giovanni Colonna on 30th May 1342.

⁶¹ *Fam.* XVII, 5. On Petrarch's visit to San Columbano, see E.H. Wilkins, *Petrarch's Eight Years in Milan* (Cambridge MA, 1958), 41f.

troubles of Milan with the peace of San Columbano. The splendid environment⁶² is ‘indeed the place of peace, the home of leisure, the repose of labours, the lodging of tranquillity, the workshop of solitude.’⁶³ It is quiet, safe and free, quite distant from the concerns of the city, almost the perfect place in which to rest the mind and give rein to other sweet occupations.⁶⁴ Set in such a place, and utterly removed from the disturbances of the town, a country dwelling would, for Petrarch, be ‘a fortunate, heavenly, angelic dwelling’⁶⁵ and he felt that he wrote not so much in the guise of a poet or philosopher, as with the feeling of a king.⁶⁶ Petrarch’s imagery seems to have many obvious parallels in classical literature. It recalls, for example, Seneca’s observations on Baiae,⁶⁷ and Virgil’s celebration of the country-dweller’s life in the second Georgic,⁶⁸ but also invites comparison with Martial’s epigrams and Juvenal’s *Satires*.⁶⁹ The contrast between city and countryside, between the sins which come from an involvement with the affairs of others and the good which springs from simplicity and self-sufficiency, however, are strikingly evocative of Stoic and Epicurean conceptions of the *vita contemplativa*.

If the solitude which Petrarch depicted in his letters to Guido Sette and Niccolò di Paolo dei Vetuli seems to have the character of a *vita contemplativa* defined in opposition to

⁶² *Fam.* XVII, 5, 7.

⁶³ *Fam.* XVII, 5, 4: ‘vere rus illud locus est pacis, otii domus, requies laborum, tranquillitatis hospitium officina.’

⁶⁴ *Fam.* XVII, 5, 6.

⁶⁵ *Fam.* XVII, 5, 7: ‘... habitatio est felix celestis angelica...’

⁶⁶ *Fam.* XVII, 5, 15.

⁶⁷ Seneca, *Ep.* li, 4 ; c.f. *Fam.* XVI, 6, 20.

⁶⁸ Virgil, *Georgics*, II, 458-540, esp. 490-99. On the connection between Virgil, *Georgics*, II and the *De vita solitaria*, see L. Panizza, ‘Active and Contemplative in Lorenzo Valla: The Fusion of Opposites,’ in B. Vickers, ed., *Arbeit, Musse, Meditation: Betrachtungen zur vita activa und vita contemplativa*, (Zurich, 1985), 181-223, here 192-201. A great deal of ink has been spilt over this episode from *Georgics*, II. Seeing it as the key to understanding the programme of the whole of the *Georgics*, scholars have been divided between ‘optimistic’ and ‘pessimistic’ readings. Despite these divisions, however, it remains true – as Leah Kronenberg has observed – that ‘most readings have focused on understanding several presumed contrasts highlighted by the passage: the contrast between the ideal and the real country life, [and] the contrast between the active and the contemplative life...’ L. J. Kronenberg, ‘The Poet’s Fiction: Virgil’s Praise of the Farmer, Philosopher, and Poet at the End of “Georgics II”,’ *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 100 (2000): 341-360. For interesting perspectives on the *vita contemplativa* and the countryside in the second Georgic, see, for example, P.J. Davis, ‘Vergil’s *Georgics* and the Pastoral Ideal,’ in A. J. Boyle, ed., *Virgil’s Ascraean Song: Ramus Essays on the Georgics* (Melbourne, 1979), 22-33; M. C. J. Putnam, *Virgil’s Poem of the Earth: Studies in the Georgics* (Princeton, 1979), 142-164; J. Strauss Clay, ‘The Argument at the End of Vergil’s Second Georgic,’ *Philologus* 120 (1976): 232-45; L. P. Wilkinson, *The Georgics of Virgil: A Critical Survey* (Oklahoma, 1997), esp. 92-3; R. F. Thomas, ‘Vestigia Ruris: Urbane Rusticity in Virgil’s *Georgics*,’ *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 97 (1995): 197-214. For an introduction to Petrarch’s knowledge of Virgil’s bucolic verse, see de Nolhac, *Pétrarque et l’humanisme*, 1:147-8.

⁶⁹ For Petrarch’s knowledge of Juvenal, see de Nolhac, *Pétrarque et l’humanisme*, 1:186-7. De Nolhac notes (1:186) that the majority of Petrarch’s citations from Juvenal are anonymous. It would not be unexpected for unattributed echoes to appear in the letters. De Nolhac’s assertion that ‘[Pétrarque] l’imite jusque dans ses œuvres italiennes’ is, I think, open to some question.

the hateful vice of an urban *vita activa* in the manner of classical authors, it is also noteworthy for its distinctive activities, which are again redolent of Stoic and Epicurean thought. In the later part of his letter to the Bishop of Viterbo, Petrarch attempted to entice his prospective guest to Vacluse by offering a more detailed description of the valley itself and went to some length to emphasise its beauty. Evoking the spirit of Virgil's *Georgics* and *Eclogues*⁷⁰ in his sensitivity for his natural surroundings,⁷¹ Petrarch described the valley as like an 'earthly Paradise' or the Elysian fields.⁷² Peace and tranquillity could be found in abundance and, as he affirmed in a letter to Philippe de Cabassoles written two years earlier, such an enclosed valley was the most perfect environment for study.⁷³ Although the lifestyle was simple, Petrarch's vast library could provide Niccolò with all the 'riches' that a studious mind could desire, while the setting would allow him to 'converse' freely with the 'saints, philosophers, poets, orators and historians' of the past.⁷⁴ Repose and study are clearly identified. This association is repeated in Petrarch's marginal notes to Virgil's first eclogue in the Codex Ambrosianus. At the very end of the verse, Tityrus tells Meliboeus that he 'might have rested here with me on the green leafage' and draws attention to the simple, but ample fare that they might eat.⁷⁵ The passage caught Petrarch's attention and above 'requiescere' he wrote 'otari, studere,' thus indicating a connection between the verdant setting, peace, leisure and study and signalling not merely his intimate relationship with Virgil's bucolic verse, but also apparently pointing towards the Stoic association of study and rusticity.⁷⁶

⁷⁰ On the subject of poetry and rusticity in the *Georgics*, see, for example, Kronenberg, 'The Poet's Fiction'; C. M. Perkell, *The Poet's Truth: A Study of the Poet in Virgil's Georgics*, (Berkeley, 1989); F. Muecke, 'Poetic Self-Consciousness in *Georgics* II,' in Boyle, ed., *Virgil's Ascræan Song*, 87-101; E. W. Leach, 'Georgics 2 and the Poem,' *Arethusa* 14 (1981): 35-48; D. O. Ross Jr., *Virgil's Elements: Physics and Poetry in the Georgics*, (Princeton, 1987). For poetry and rusticity in the *Eclogues*, see, for example, B. F. Dick, 'Virgil's Pastoral Poetic: A Reading of the First Eclogue,' *American Journal of Philology* 91/3 (July 1970): 277-93; R. B. Rutherford, 'Virgil's Poetic Ambitions in *Eclogue* 6,' *Greece and Rome*, 2nd ser., 36/1 (April 1989): 42-50. More generally, see, for example, C. Fantazzi, 'Virgilian Pastoral and Roman Love Poetry,' *American Journal of Philology* 87 (1966): 171-91.

⁷¹ *Fam.* XVI, 6, 23.

⁷² *Fam.* XVI, 6, 24: 'tale esse ut in Paradiso delitium, sicut theologi loquuntur, sive, ut poete, in campis Elysiis natum putes'.

⁷³ *Fam.* XI, 4, 2.

⁷⁴ *Fam.* XVI, 6, 25: 'Postremo, ne singula prosequar, hic tibi quies exoptata et votiva tranquillitas et, qua nulle studioso animo divitiae cariores, librorum copia ingens adest Versaberis cum sanctis cum philosophis cum poetis cum oratoribus cum historicis'.

⁷⁵ Virgil, *Ecl.* I, 79-81.

⁷⁶ M. L. Lord, 'Petrarch and Virgil's First Eclogue: The Codex Ambrosianus,' *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 86 (1982): 253-276, here 269. This relationship between rusticity and literary endeavour is further indicated by the comment adjacent to l. 74 ('ita meae, quondam felix pecus, ite capell[a]e'). Petrarch gives 'libelli' as a gloss for 'capellae'.

3. Stoic and Epicurean themes in Petrarch's *solitudo*: the *occupatus* and the *solitarius*

In addition to the contrast between *rus* and *urbs* in the epistolary evidence, and the emphasis on the peace and tranquillity which might be enjoyed in the idyllic surroundings of the countryside, Petrarch's description of the contrast between the *occupatus* and the *solitarius* in the first book of the *De vita solitaria* gives credence to the suggestion that *solitudo* was conceived as a *vita contemplativa* in imitation of Stoic and Epicurean philosophy. Indeed, the terms in which Petrarch erected the contrast at the heart of the first book of the *De vita solitaria* are redolent of Stoic and Epicurean thought. As Martellotti has pointed out, the term '*occupatus*', juxtaposed with '*solitarius*', is used most frequently in the works of Seneca,⁷⁷ and it appears that Petrarch's description of each of these two emblematic figures bear the hallmarks of the Stoic/Epicurean conception of the *vita activa* and the *vita contemplativa* respectively.

As in both Stoic and Epicurean treatments of the *vita activa*, Petrarch's urban *occupatus* is preoccupied with the affairs of others and is involved in every kind of vice. From the very first moment of his waking, he is committed to involving himself with others,⁷⁸ driven on by ambition and focussed entirely on treachery.⁷⁹ In this he is undiscerning and, like Juvenal,⁸⁰ Petrarch presents him as capable of thinking about corrupting a bargain, betraying a friend, and seducing the chaste wife of a neighbour equally.⁸¹ This is no more evident than at the courts, where much of his morning is spent. There, before the magistrates, he mixes truth and falsehood to the detriment of others and to his own shame, harming the innocent and furthering the guilty as he does so.⁸²

Returning home for lunch, the *occupatus* presides over a scene filled with disgusting manifestations of excess. Munificence and luxury is combined with degradation and disorder, while wealth is displayed ostentatiously alongside privation and low standards. 'Silver plate, [wrought] with gold flies through the hall,' Petrarch wrote echoing similar descriptions in Latin literature,⁸³

⁷⁷ Martellotti, *Prose*, 300, n.1.

⁷⁸ *De vita solitaria*, Z I, ii, 1; P I, ii; *Prose*, 300-2.

⁷⁹ *De vita solitaria*, Z I, ii, 1; P I, ii; *Prose*, 300.

⁸⁰ e.g. Juvenal, *Sat.* III, 30; 41-2.

⁸¹ *De vita solitaria*, Z I, ii, 1; P I, ii; *Prose*, 300.

⁸² *De vita solitaria*, Z I, ii, 2; P I, ii; *Prose*, 302. It is striking that this passage appears to repeat Petrarch's account of his own experiences in the *Posteritati. Sen.* XVIII, 1.

⁸³ c.f. Cicero, *Pro S. Roscio*, 133-4; Horace, *Sat.* II, ii, 23-52; II, iv, 11-88; II, vi, 100-5; II, viii; Juvenal, *Sat.* V, 24-155.

and drinking cups fashioned from hollowed-out gems [. T]he bench is clothed with silk, the wall with purple, the ground with tapestries, while a suite of unclothed servants shiver. With the line of battle having been drawn up, the signal for the fight is given by a clarion. The captains of cookery join battle with the captains of the dining hall, a huge din rises up, dishes sought out from land and sea are carried in, and wine trodden during the time of ancient consuls. Wines both Italian [*nostre*] and Greek glow red in the gold; mixed together in one cup are Gnosos and Meroe, Vesuvius and Falernus, the hills of Sorrento and of Calabria: nor is [this] enough unless Ausonian Bacchus, steeped with Hyblaeon honey or the juice of the eastern cane, and made fragrant with blackberries, has changed his nature through art. In another part [of the hall] may be seen an equal procession of a different kind: horrible beasts, unknown fish, unheard-of birds, smeared with ground spices and forgetful of their old homeland, certain [of them] testifying to their origin only with their designation and now retaining only the name of the Phasian.⁸⁴ Spectacular dishes for the diners that have experienced all the caprices of the cooks smoke: if a hungry man were to see with what filth and with how much meretricious wheedling [*lenocinio*] they were concocted, he would rise satisfied by the sight alone.⁸⁵

After several hours devoted to this meal, the *occupatus* once again returns to his deceitful machinations. Quoting Juvenal, Petrarch points to the fact that he is impatient to return to his deceitfulness, cupidity, anger and lusts.⁸⁶ Unwilling to brook any restraint or waste any opportunity to further his desires, he sets to his task with a renewed energy and redoubled ingenuity. Passing some time in this way, he eventually finds that he has to venture outside to further his wicked ends and Petrarch uses this as an opportunity to locate him firmly within an urban context. As in Horace's self-portrait in *Sat. II, vi*,⁸⁷ the *occupatus* is portrayed as having to force his way through streets strewn with every kind of filth, pushing his way through the crowd, sweating and panting all the way.⁸⁸

Despite the vigour with which he involves himself in others' affairs and indulges his passions, however, Petrarch seems to follow the Epicureans (and, to a lesser extent, the Stoics) in emphasising the fact that the busy man is wracked by fear. Throughout his activities and in the midst of his indulgences, he has been tormented by concerns, both

⁸⁴ Pheasant? It is possible that Petrarch intends to suggest that pheasants come from around the River Phasis.

⁸⁵ *De vita solitaria*, Z I, ii, 3; P I, ii: '...volat atriis argentum auro infectum et pocula cavis gemmis expressa, scamnum serico vestitur, ostro paries, terra tapetibus, dum servorum nuda interim cohors tremit. Instructa acie datur tandem lituo signum pugne. Coquine duces aule ducibus concurrunt, ingens fragor exoritur, convehuntur terra marique conquisite epule et vina priscis calcata consulibus. Ardent rutilo in auro nostre graieque vindemie, uno in scipho Gnosos et Meroe, Vesevus Falernusque miscentur, Surrentinique colles et Calabri. Nec satis est, nisi Bacchus Ausonius, vel Hibleo melle vel Eoe suco medicatus harundinis, baccisque nigrantibus odoratus, naturam arte mutaverit. Parte alia par diversi generis pompa conspicitur: fere horribiles, pisces incogniti, volucres inaudite, pulvere precioso oblite et oblite veteris patrie, quedam voce testantes originem, nomenque iam solum de phaside retinentes. Fumant ipsis edentibus stupenda fercula et omne cocorum passa ludibrium, que siquis valde licet esuriens cernat quam fede quantoque sint coagulata lenocinio, solo spectaculo satur adscendat.' *Prose*, 306.

⁸⁶ *De vita solitaria*, Z I, ii, 5; P I, ii; *Prose*, 312, quoting Juvenal, *Sat. XIV*, 176-7.

⁸⁷ Horace, *Sat. II, vi*, 27-31.

⁸⁸ *De vita solitaria*, Z I, ii, 6; P I, ii; *Prose*, 314. c.f. *Invective contra medicum*, II, 99; Marsh, 80.

because he fears treachery or loss,⁸⁹ and because he is on occasions pricked by the last vestiges of his conscience.⁹⁰ Though he conducts his life with fervour, it brings him no pleasure and when he retires at night, he is torn by conflicting emotions.⁹¹ He lies in bed, Petrarch claims, tormented by the memories of the day. Although he will certainly wake with a familiar eagerness to return to his wicked ways, the darkness brings remembrance of 'clients deceived, the poor oppressed, farmers pushed from their land, deflowered virgins, betrayed wards, despoiled widows, the innocent harried and killed,' and, thinking of the Furies punishing him, he frequently cries out in horror from his sleep.⁹²

Representing the very opposite of the *occupatus*, Petrarch's *solitarius* appears to manifest the key features of Stoic and Epicurean conceptions of the *vita contemplativa*. As in the works of his classical antecedents, the solitary man, living away from the city and cut off from the affairs of men like St. Jerome,⁹³ St. Benedict⁹⁴ and Pope Celestine V,⁹⁵ experiences peace, enjoys moderation, offers regular prayers and occupies himself with study. Unlike the *occupatus*, Petrarch writes that the *solitarius*

is filled with virtuous joy, filled with sacred hope, full of pious love – not like Nisus' [love] for Eurialus, but like Peter's [love] for Christ – filled with a sound conscience, a sense of security among men, a fear of God, free from noxious foods and useless cares, alone, quiet, tranquil, like an angel, beloved of God, causing fear to no-one, loved by all...⁹⁶

Living without concern for *res aliena*, he 'envies no-one, [and] hates no-one.' A self-contained figure like a Stoic or Epicurean sage, he is, indeed,

content with his own lot and inaccessible to the injuries of fortune, he fears nothing, desires nothing; he knows that poison has not been sprinkled over his vessels, he knows that a little suffices for a man's life, and that the true and greatest wealth is to wish for nothing, the greatest power to fear nothing; he lives a happy and peaceful life, tranquil nights, leisurely days and secure meals; he wanders freely, he sits down without fear, he neither plots anything nor fears

⁸⁹ e.g. *De vita solitaria*, Z I, ii, 3; P I, ii; *Prose*, 306.

⁹⁰ *De vita solitaria*, Z I, ii, 2; P I, ii; *Prose*, 302, referring to Cicero, *Phil.* III, ix, 22; *De vita solitaria*, Z, I, ii, 4; P I, ii; *Prose*, 310.

⁹¹ *De vita solitaria*, Z I, ii, 8; P I, ii; *Prose*, 316.

⁹² *De vita solitaria*, Z I, ii, 8; P I, ii: 'Tum diurna negotia, deceptos clientes, oppressos pauperes, pulsos finibus agricolas, stupratos virgines, circumscriptos pupillos, spoliatas viduas, afflictos necatosque innoxios, cumque his omnibus ultrices scelerum Furias videt; sepe itaque dormiens exclamat, sepe conqueritur, et sepe metu subito somnus abrumpitur.' *Prose*, 316.

⁹³ *De vita solitaria*, Z II, iii, 6; P II, v; *Prose*, 440, quoting Jerome, *Ep.* XXII.

⁹⁴ *De vita solitaria*, Z II, iii, 9; P II, vi; *Prose*, 450.

⁹⁵ *De vita solitaria*, Z II, iii, 18; P II, viii; *Prose*, 474, referring to Dante, *Inf.* III, 60.

⁹⁶ *De vita solitaria*, Z I, ii, 8; P I, ii: 'Iste [*solitarius*] autem plenus honesto gaudio, plenus sancta spe, plenus amore pio, non Euriali ut Nisus, sed ut Petrus Cristi, plenus conscientie integritate, securitate hominum, Dei metu, nocituri cibi et inutilium vacuus curarum, solus, tacitus, tranquillus, angelo simillimus, Deo carus, formidabilis nemini, cunctis amabilis...' referring to Virgil, *Aen.* IX, 176ff, *Prose*, 316.

any plots against him; he knows that he is loved for himself and not for his possessions. He knows that his death is of use to no-one, that his life is not harmful to anyone, and judges it to be of great interest not how long he lives, but how well he lives. Nor does he bother much about where or when he will die, but esteems only the manner of his death. On one thing only is he intent with his greatest desire: that he will conclude with a beautiful ending the tale of a good life.⁹⁷

This peace is intimately bound up with the manner in which the solitary man conducts his day. Whereas the *occupatus* devotes hours to involving himself in others' affairs, deceiving everyone he meets as he rushes around the city, the *solitarius* lives for the glory of God and for edifying study.⁹⁸ Spent in the company of the birds besides a murmuring stream, he follows the example of St. Bernard⁹⁹ in filling his days with humble prayers.¹⁰⁰ In keeping with his prayer for continence, his meals are of modest fare served in a simple setting and, sitting at a table of innocence, his conscience is a paradise.¹⁰¹

4. *Quid tamen ego certius novi, qualis solitarie vite status interior sit?*

Although Petrarch described the contrast between the *occupatus* and the *solitarius*, and between *rus* and *urbs* using language and imagery which seem to have been drawn from his sources for Stoic and Epicurean thought, it would not be valid to infer conceptual dependence from literary similarity. The fact that Petrarch included many of the characteristic features of a Stoic or Epicurean *vita contemplativa* alongside motifs drawn from Latin bucolic verse in the *De vita solitaria* conceals underlying conceptual differences and a divergence from the foundations of Stoic and Epicurean thought.

Petrarch's relationships with his sources was far from slavish and he was not averse to castigating classical authors for their views on solitude in the *De vita solitaria*. In keeping with his general understanding of imitation, Petrarch agreed with Quintilian that – with particular respect to classical works on solitude – emulation should not be confused with uncritical reproduction, and contended that it is easier to surpass an author than merely to

⁹⁷ *De vita solitaria*, Z I, ii, 3; P I, ii: 'Nulli penitus invidet, nullum odit; sorte contentus sua et fortune iniuriis inaccessus, nichil metuit, nichil cupit; scit non spargi venena fictilibus, scit vite hominum pauca sufficere, et summas verasque divitias nil optare, summum imperium nil timere; letum agit atque tranquillum evum, placidas noctes, otiosos dies et secunda convivia; it liber, sedet intrepidus, nullas struit aut cavet insidias, scit se amari et non sua. Scit mortem suam nulli utilem, nulli damnosam vitam, neque multum interesse arbitratur quam diu, sed quam bene vivat, nec ubi aut quando moriatur magni existimat, sed qualiter; in id unum summo studio intentus, ut bene actam vite fabulam pulcro fine concludat.' *Prose*, 308-10.

⁹⁸ *De vita solitaria*, Z I, ii, 1; P I, ii; *Prose*, 302.

⁹⁹ *De vita solitaria*, Z II, iii, 14; P II, vii; *Prose*, 462.

¹⁰⁰ *De vita solitaria*, Z I, ii, 2; P I, ii; *Prose*, 304.

¹⁰¹ *De vita solitaria*, Z I, ii, 4; P I, ii; *Prose*, 310.

replicate his views.¹⁰² Although he admired Cicero,¹⁰³ Virgil, Horace¹⁰⁴ and Seneca,¹⁰⁵ Petrarch did not aver from finding fault with their writings and challenging their conceptions of solitude. In a discussion of whether all men are suited to a life of solitude, Petrarch noted that Seneca had advised Lucilius to avoid not merely the many, or the few, but even individuals.¹⁰⁶ While he agreed that the multitude should be avoided, however, Petrarch disagreed with the suggestion that solitude should entail isolation.¹⁰⁷ Indeed, reviewing Seneca's life in the second book, Petrarch openly admitted that he disliked Seneca's view of solitude.¹⁰⁸ Quintilian, too, was criticised, although in more deferential terms. For Quintilian, the groves and woods of the countryside were unsuited to literary endeavour, although retirement itself was to be desired by all writers.¹⁰⁹ Despite implicitly accepting that such a view was in tension with his own, Petrarch denied that their opinions were completely at variance and, by allowing Quintilian to retain some claim to authority in this regard, clung to his own enthusiasm for the countryside.¹¹⁰

This willingness to criticise classical authors reflects a deeper divergence from the moral philosophy on which Stoic and Epicurean notions of the *vita contemplativa* were based and Petrarch appears to have integrated images and motifs appropriated from classical literature into a quite different conceptual framework. Whereas both the Epicureans and the Stoics based their conception of the *vita contemplativa* on the assumption that specific activities and locations could communicate moral qualities, Petrarch's understanding of solitude does not involve so strong an emphasis on action or physicality. Particularly with respect to countryside imagery in the *Canzoniere* and the further elaboration of solitude in the *De vita solitaria*, Petrarch's attitude towards landscape and *occupationes* was far more fluid than in the works of his classical antecedents. Implicitly rejecting the division between a *vita activa* and a *vita contemplativa* as the basis for his treatment of solitude, Petrarch placed greater stress on the internal condition of the agent, and as such positioned *solitudo* in close relation to *otium*, discussed in the previous chapter.

Petrarch's divergence from the conceptual basis of Stoic and Epicurean notions of the *vita contemplativa* is first suggested by the development of the *rus-urbs* motif in the *Canzoniere*. Repeating some of the imagery familiar to classical treatments of the theme,

¹⁰² *De vita solitaria*, Z I, vi, 2; P I, vii; *Prose*, 386, quoting Quintilian, *Inst. Orat.* X, 2, 9-10.

¹⁰³ See, for example, *Fam.* XII, 8; *De vita solitaria*, Z II, viii, 2; P II, xii; *Prose*, 534-8.

¹⁰⁴ *De vita solitaria*, Z II, vii, 2; P II, xii; *Prose*, 528-32.

¹⁰⁵ *De vita solitaria*, Z I, vi, 2; P I, vii; *Prose*, 386.

¹⁰⁶ *De vita solitaria*, Z I, v, 3; P I, vii; *Prose*, 370-2, quoting Seneca, *Ep.*, x, 1.

¹⁰⁷ *De vita solitaria*, Z I, v, 3; P I, vii; *Prose*, 372.

¹⁰⁸ *De vita solitaria*, Z II, viii, 1; P II, xiii; *Prose*, 534, referring to Seneca, *Ep.* x, 1.

¹⁰⁹ *De vita solitaria*, Z I, v, 1; P, vii; *Prose*, 362, quoting Quintilian, *Inst. Orat.* X, iii, 22-5.

¹¹⁰ *De vita solitaria*, Z I, v, 1; P, vii; *Prose*, 364.

Petrarch railed against the vice of the city and yearned for the countryside, occasionally exploiting opportunities to develop parallels with the eschatological language of *Revelations*. Describing Avignon as ‘*Babilonia*’, he presented it as the city ‘whence all good has flown, the dwelling of sorrow, the mother of errors,’¹¹¹ and decried its inhabitants as ‘those deaf and blear-eyed minds that have lost the path to Heaven.’¹¹² Given over to every form of iniquity, Petrarch could not help but express his disgust.¹¹³ Juxtaposing city and countryside, he called on the riverbanks, meadows and woods in *Canz.* 259 to testify that he had sought out the solitary life in order to avoid those ignorant of virtue.¹¹⁴ Expressing the same sentiment in a metrical epistle written to Giacomo Colonna in 1338, he voiced his hatred of the querulous mob that thronged the city and made plain his desire to return to the countryside, where he could enjoy the company of good friends.¹¹⁵

Despite its apparent similarities with Stoic and Epicurean thought, however, Petrarch’s development of the *rus-urbs* motif undermines the comparison. In contrast to both the Stoic and the Epicureans, Petrarch indicates that physical separation from the city and from *occupationes* contributed little to the attainment of peace. As I have argued elsewhere, by representing Avignon as ‘*Babilonia*’, Petrarch presented it not as a literal city of vice, in which physicality and moral identity could be equated, but as an emblem for worldly desire and a mirror in which he could examine his own conscience.¹¹⁶ The same is true of the image of the countryside. Despite finding a certain delight in the beauty of the countryside, Petrarch experienced nothing more than a change of scenery while he persisted in his love for Laura. In Vacluse, he was free from the *vulgus* and from the sways of Fortune,¹¹⁷ but – with Love still leading him on¹¹⁸ – he was tormented by the indifference of his beloved and filled with sorrow.¹¹⁹ Wandering alone ‘*per campagne et per colli*’, he was consumed by care and felt burdened with love and grief.¹²⁰ Indeed, so long as he was plagued by his affection, the

¹¹¹ *Canz.* 114, ll.1-3:

‘... l’empia Babilonia ond’ è fuggita
ogni vergogna, ond’ ogni bene è forì,
albergo di dolor, madre d’errori’.

¹¹² *Canz.* 259, ll.3-4:

‘... questi ingegni sordi et loschi
che la strada del Cielo ànon smarrita’.

¹¹³ *Canz.* 136, ll.1-8; 137, ll.1-5.

¹¹⁴ *Canz.* 259, ll.1-3.

¹¹⁵ *Ep Met.* I, 6, ll.215-17. For a discussion of *Ep. Met.* I, 6 in the context of Petrarch’s treatment of solitude, see Petrie, ‘Petrarch *solitarius*’, 31-2.

¹¹⁶ Lee, ‘Sin City?’ *passim*.

¹¹⁷ *Canz.* 114, ll.9-11.

¹¹⁸ *ibid.* l.5.

¹¹⁹ *ibid.*, ll.12-13.

¹²⁰ *Canz.* 125, ll.1-13:

‘Se ‘l pensier che mi strugge
come’ è pungente et saldo
così vestisse d’un color conforme,
forse tal m’arde et fugge

landscape itself manifested his sorrow. Although he was able to think on higher things¹²¹ in the comfort of the rosy wood,¹²² the persistence of his love made him see Laura everywhere and enhanced his distress.¹²³ The appropriation of Ovidian metamorphosis throughout the *Canzoniere* serves to project both Laura and his love onto the landscape. A full survey is unnecessary, but it may be noted that Petrarch himself figures, like Acteon, as a stag fleeing the hounds,¹²⁴ while Laura, even after her death, appears 'in the clear water and on the green grass and in the trunk of a beech tree and in a white cloud.'¹²⁵ His interior condition not only prolonged his sense of misery, but even shaped his apprehension of his surroundings. Even if – at most – Petrarch's physical dislocation from the city and separation from *occupationes* in the quiet of the countryside may be seen as helping to create the potential for the attainment of peace, the positive *solitudo* to which he was so attached evidently consisted not in the landscape, but in his interior condition.

The priority which Petrarch accords to an inner moral condition, and the degree to which it should be separated from location in understanding solitude is developed more fully in the *De vita solitaria*. Digressing from a biographical sketch of St. Francis of Assisi,

ch' avria parte del caldo
et desteriasi Amor là dov' or dorme;
men solitarie l'orme
foran de' miei pie' lassi
per compagne et per colli,
me gli occhi ad ogn'or molli,
ardendo lei che come un ghiaccio stassi
et non lascia in me dramma
che non sia foco et fiamma.'

M. A. M. Flansburg, 'Landscape Imagery in Petrarch's "Canzoniere": Development and Characterization of the Imagery and an Illustration in the Virgil Frontispiece by Simone Martini,' Unpublished PhD thesis, (University of Oklahoma, 1986), 115: "Petrarch converted his affection for the woodlands and the beech and laurel groves of the valley into the seductive and dangerous Virgilian groves of love [c.f. *Aen.* 6, 132-148]. His amorous woods do not copy the claustrophobic darkness or golden boughs of the Underworld; however, Petrarch distorted his personal affection for Vaucluse and his love for nature. His woods are deceptively green and shady and the projected object in a most beautiful flower or tree. As in Virgil, danger of thorns and snares and other obstacles mark the course to his object, but he is compelled to advance regardless of foreknowledge of his peril. Petrarch's obstacles are usually more specific metaphors than the darkness and terrain of Hades; they are barbs and vines that encroach insidiously to entangle and pain him." This is an extremely interesting suggestion, but there seems to be some question as to the extent to which a Virgilian parallel can be sustained by the available material. If a comparison is to be made, it must be confined to the snares and traps that the wood contains. It does not seem possible to see how Petrarch could have adapted Virgil's description of Aeneas' escape from the wood in a satisfactory manner.

¹²¹ *Ep. Met.* I, 6, l. 226.

¹²² *ibid.*, ll. 211-14.

¹²³ *ibid.*, ll. 144-51.

¹²⁴ *Canz.* 23, ll. 156-60.

¹²⁵ *Canz.* 129, ll. 140-3:

'I l'ò più volte (or chi fia che mi 'l creda?)
ne l'acqua chiara et sopra l'erba verde
veduto viva, et nel troncon d'un faggio
e 'n bianca nube.'

Petrarch argues that there are three types of solitude: one of place (*solitudo loci*), one of time (*solitudo temporis*) and one of mind (*solitudo animi*).¹²⁶ Since the *solitudo temporis* is that which all people experience at night – ‘when there is solitude and silence even at the rostra’ – Petrarch essentially distinguishes only between the *solitudo loci* and the *solitudo animi*.

This is in itself a significant break from Stoic and Epicurean notions of the *vita contemplativa*. For both the Stoics and the Epicureans, there was no need to speak of a *solitudo animi* separate from a *solitudo loci*: the two were in every sense identical. For Petrarch, however, it is possible for a man to possess one and not the other, and his discussion of this point reveals his distance from these two classical traditions of thought.

Having described their respective days, Petrarch reiterated that he had placed before Philippe de Cabasoles a view of the man of action (*occupatus*) and of the man of leisure (*otiosus*).¹²⁷ Despite the resonance this appears to have with the classical distinction between the *vita activa* and the *vita contemplativa*, however, Petrarch almost immediately subverts it. It is, he admits, possible for some *occupati* to live virtuously in the world.¹²⁸ Although this is rare, it is nevertheless exceptionally praiseworthy and Petrarch is led to reflect further. Engaging directly with Seneca, he juxtaposed selective quotations to illustrate the difficulty of agreeing entirely with the philosopher’s view of *occupationes* and the *vita contemplativa*. Misrepresenting the sense of *Ep.* Iv, Petrarch initially claims that Seneca had argued that places contribute nothing to tranquillity,¹²⁹ and then suggests – quite rightly, under the circumstances – that this is contradicted by another passage in which Seneca indicated the need to flee from the very sight of the Forum.¹³⁰ Satisfied that he has ‘proved’ Seneca’s inconsistency, Petrarch then further misrepresents his source material by ‘agreeing’ that ‘it is the mind which must make everything agreeable to itself’ and denying that there is much to be found in places.¹³¹ While he briefly accepts that a composed mind makes allowances for

¹²⁶ *De vita solitaria*, Z II, iii, 12; P II, vi: ‘Triplex, nempe, si rite complector, solitudo est: loci scilicet, de qua maxime michi nunc sermo susceptus est; temporis, qualis est noctium, quando etiam in rostris solitudo silentiumque est; animi, qualis est eorum qui vi profundissime contemplationis abstracti luce media et frequenti foro quid illic geratur nesciunt, qui quotiens et ubicunque voluerint soli sunt.’ *Prose*, 454.

¹²⁷ *De vita solitaria*, Z I, iii, 1; P I, iii; *Prose*, 318.

¹²⁸ *De vita solitaria*, Z I, iii, 2; P I, iii; *Prose*, 322.

¹²⁹ *De vita solitaria*, Z I, iii, 2; P I, iii; *Prose*, 324, quoting Seneca, *Ep.* Iv, 8.

¹³⁰ *De vita solitaria*, Z I, iii, 2; P I, iii; *Prose*, 324, quoting Seneca, *Ep.* li, 4 and *Ep.* xxviii, 6. It is worth noting that Zeitlin (127) almost inverts the meaning of this passage by according ‘*nam ut loca...parum salubria*’ to Petrarch and not to Seneca, *Ep.* xxviii, 6.

¹³¹ *De vita solitaria*, Z I, iii, 2; P I, iii: ‘Est in locis aliquid, pace Senecam dixerim, est multum, sed non totum, fateor. Illud quidem, ut sibi videtur, in animo est. Nam sic ait: “Animus est, qui sibi commendat omnia.”’ quoting Seneca, *Ep.* Iv, 8; *Prose*, 324. This gnomic quotation is nothing short of a total misrepresentation or misunderstanding of *Ep.* Iv. In this letter, Seneca drew attention to Servilius Vatia, a wealthy Roman aristocrat who completely isolated himself at his country villa. Although men who had been ruined by friendship or enmity in public life praised Vatia for his good

its surroundings,¹³² Petrarch challenges the view that *occupationes* and location preclude virtue and accords primacy to the condition of the mind.

That the mind may allow a man to be virtuous despite being in the city is illustrated by a frank confession a little earlier in the text. Unable to stay in Vacluse all the time, Petrarch was sometimes obliged to live in the city. While there, however, he was free from the fears of which Stoic and Epicurean writers were so conscious. Shutting off his senses, he was able to create a solitude within himself and could walk the streets untouched by the turpitude of the vulgar mob.¹³³ The same could be said of St. Francis of Assisi. St. Francis experienced not merely the solitude of the night and the solitude of place, but also possessed the solitude of mind in abundance. Although he was at home in the wilderness, Petrarch argues, he was equally serene in the city. His body might have been jostled by the mob, but, Petrarch contends, he was nevertheless granted great serenity because his mind was fixed on heavenly things.¹³⁴

The greater importance of the *solitudo animi* compared to the *solitudo loci* is further confirmed a little later in the text at Z I, iv, 6. Following a passage discussing Plotinus' hierarchy of virtues¹³⁵ – which Zeitlin highlighted as clear proof of his 'remoteness from mystic thought' and enthusiasm for a classical *vita contemplativa*¹³⁶ – Petrarch asks

What ... do I know more certainly than the inner nature of the solitary life? Caves, hills and groves are accessible to all equally; no-one shuts out those entering, no-one drives away those going in, there is no doorkeeper, no guard for [this] unpopulated place. But of what value to me is the entrance to places alone, what of the fact [that] winding streams carry me along, what help are the lustrous woods, what use are the fixed mountains, if wherever I go, my mind follows, to the same extent in the woods as in the towns? It is that [the mind] which before all else must be put aside; that, I say, that must be left behind at home, and it must be humbly begged of the Lord that he make a pure heart

sense, Seneca criticised him for having known how to hide, but not how to live (*Ep.* lv, 3-4) and perhaps deliberately intended to present him as having lived in accordance with some poorly-understood form of Epicureanism. It was not vice or dissolution which attracted Seneca's ire, but rather the fact that Vatia had shut himself away from all human company and devoted himself to food, sleep and lust out of fear. (*Ep.* lv, 5) Seneca's criticism rests not on Vatia's practices *per se*, but on the error of believing that the person who lives for no-one lives only for himself. As a result, the letter becomes a demonstration of the importance of friendship to solitude. If Lucilius sustains his friendships in his mind, Seneca argues that there is no need for him to fear following Vatia's example at his country villa. It is in the sense of the remembrance of friends that Seneca used the phrase '*animus est, qui sibi commendat omnia*', and not in the sense suggested by Petrarch.

¹³² *De vita solitaria*, Z I, iii, 3; *P* I, iii: 'Itaque quod de locis dixi, de animo repetam: esse in illo aliquid, multum esse, totum minime, sed in eo tantum, qui oportunitatem locis tribuit, animo rationem.' *Prose*, 324. In his edition of the text, Martellotti capitalises '*eo*', but it seems difficult to agree with this decision, and more plausible to suggest that '*eo*' agrees with '*animus*'.

¹³³ *De vita solitaria*, Z I, iv, 3; *P* I, iv; *Prose*, 336.

¹³⁴ *De vita solitaria*, Z II, iii, 12; *P* II, vi; *Prose*, 454-6.

¹³⁵ *De vita solitaria*, Z I, iv, 5; *P* I, iv; referring to Macrobius, *In Somn. Scip.*, I, viii, 5-11; *Prose*, 340-2.

¹³⁶ Zeitlin, 'Introduction', 59.

within me, and to renew an upright spirit in this heart. Only then will I penetrate the hidden life of solitude.¹³⁷

Although this passage is – like so many others – suffused with an enthusiasm for the beauty of the countryside, Petrarch nevertheless carefully distinguishes between the *solitudo loci* and the *solitudo animi*. While all men may retreat to the woodland and enjoy the *ambiti amnes* and *lustrate silve*, such surroundings are of no value so long as the mind carries its concerns with it, as Petrarch's poetic persona in the *Canzoniere* so readily illustrates. It is only with a pure heart and an upright spirit that a man may penetrate to the 'inner nature of the solitary life', the 'hidden life of solitude'. It is his interior nature that determines the agent's relationship with his environment and it is this 'hidden life of solitude' – identical to the *solitudo animi* – which constitutes the one *true* solitude.

5. Understanding the *solitudo animi*: the problem of *res aliena*.

Petrarch's description of the 'hidden life of solitude' in terms of the *solitudo animi* clearly marks him out as having diverged from the structures of Stoic and Epicurean thought. Abandoning the emphasis on the separation of a contemplative life from an active life, he appears to participate in a classical tradition only at the level of imagery. Despite this, however, it might nevertheless be argued that the *solitudo animi* still displays features characteristic of a Stoic or Epicurean *vita contemplativa* and this is a line of argument which, although couched in slightly different terms, is central to both Zeitlin and Tripet's interpretation of the *De via solitaria*.¹³⁸

For both Zeitlin and Tripet, Petrarch's understanding of the true nature of solitude was heavily dependent on the Stoic/Epicurean critique of involvement in *res aliena* and their concomitant emphasis on subjective self-awareness. As we have seen, the Epicurean rejection of the *vita activa* was based on the belief that involvement in the affairs of others would not only leave a person vulnerable to anxiety, but would also distract him from the things which would certainly bring him joy. Where a man made himself dependent on another's will, he forsook his own identity, and made himself subject to the fickleness of fate

¹³⁷ *De vita solitaria*, Z I, iv, 6; P I, v: 'Quid tamen ego certius novi, qualis solitarie vite status interior sit? Antra, colles et nemora eque omnibus patent; nemo arcet intrantes, nemo pellit ingressos, deserti nullus est ianitor, nullus custos. Sed quid locorum solus introitus, quid ambitu vehunt amnes, quid lustrate iuvant silve, quid inessis prosunt montes, si quocunque iero, animus me meus insequitur, talis in silvis qualis erat in urbibus? Ille ante omnia deponendus, ille, inquam, ille domi relinquendus erat, suppliciterque poscendum a domino ut cor in me crearet mundum, et spiritum rectum his in visceribus innovaret. Tum demum vite solitarie abdita penetrassem.' *Prose*, 344.

¹³⁸ Zeitlin, 'Introduction', 60-1; Tripet, *Pétrarque ou la connaissance de soi*, 40-5.

and to worry. This line of argument was developed further by the Stoics and the stress on subjective ends is repeated in sources known to Petrarch. Writing about the god in all men, Seneca attempted to demonstrate that ‘no man should glory in anything except in that which is his own.’¹³⁹ Where a man made himself subject to the will of another, even that of a god, he became forgetful of his own true self and of the ends for which he was suited. It was better, Seneca contended, for a person to live according to his own nature, and to pursue the ends for which he was intended by birth.¹⁴⁰

Although Petrarch did not share their scepticism for the divine, there is some evidence to suggest that he attempted to emulate the Stoic and Epicurean treatment of subjectivism. In keeping with his frequent description of the *occupatus* as one who ‘*se se atque alios involvat*,’¹⁴¹ the central portion of the first book of the *De vita solitaria* displays an acute consciousness of the deleterious effects of involvement in the affairs of others and decries the attendant loss of selfhood in a manner which seems to evoke the two schools of classical philosophy. As in both Stoic and Epicurean thought, Petrarch was troubled by the fact that such people subject themselves to another’s mind and was aware that this would entail the substitution of another’s objectives for their own subjective ends. Explaining the vice and sorrow of most busy men, Petrarch wondered ironically whether

the condition of those who are occupied with another’s business, who are ruled by the nod of another, and who learn what they ought to do from another’s look, is happier. For these people, everything is another’s: another’s house, another’s roof, another’s sleep, another’s food and – what is most serious – another’s mind, another’s outlook; they do not cry or laugh by their own choice, but, having put aside their own, put on the disposition of another; in short, they direct themselves towards another, they think another[’s thoughts], they live another[’s life].¹⁴²

As Tripet has argued, Petrarch seems to follow Stoic and Epicurean critiques of the *vita activa* in suggesting that a man who was involved in *res aliena* would become forgetful of his true end and would lose his moral autonomy.¹⁴³ Having forgotten his true nature and

¹³⁹ Seneca, *Ep.* xli, 7.

¹⁴⁰ Seneca, *Ep.* xli, 7-8.

¹⁴¹ see note 78, above.

¹⁴² *De vita solitaria*, Z I, iii, 1; P, I, iii: ‘Nisi forte felicius est illorum conditio, qui alienis negotiis occupantur, alieni nutus arbitrio reguntur, et quid agere illos oporteat in aliena fronte condiscunt. Omnia illis aliena sunt: alienum limen, alienum textum, alienus somnus, alienus cibus, et, quod est maximum, aliena mens, aliena frons; non suo iudicio flent et rident, sed abiectis propriis alienos induunt affectus, denique alienum tractant, alienum cogitant, alieno vivunt.’ *Prose*, 318. Zeitlin’s use of punctuation and translation of this passage (122) is again questionable and leads to some degree of misunderstanding.

¹⁴³ Tripet, *Pétrarque ou la connaissance de soi*, 47.

concerned only with another's affairs, Petrarch suggests that the *occupatus* nevertheless only accrues sin for himself.¹⁴⁴

The life of the solitary man is praised in similar terms. Petrarch seems to celebrate the fact that – cut off from other people's business and having only himself for a master – the solitary man enjoyed a fullness of selfhood. Thinking back to the fear of living at another's beck and call, Petrarch rejoices that the *solitarius* is not required to attend a banquet when he does not wish to eat, is not obliged to speak when he would rather remain silent, is not held up by the pointless bustle of the city, and is not prey to the petty sniping and offences of the majority of *occupati*.¹⁴⁵ Acknowledging that men have been created so that they might find peace in Christ, Petrarch marvels at how wonderful it is to live according to one's own will, wandering in the countryside as one wishes and belonging to oneself at all times.¹⁴⁶

Zeitlin appears correct in affirming that while Petrarch Christianised the concept appropriately, '[t]he virtue to which the solitary erects his shrine is the self-centred virtue of the Epicureans, and time and again the Epicurean sentiment breaks through in the phrasing.'¹⁴⁷ As in Stoic and Epicurean philosophy, a sense of subjectivism is made a predicate of a truth to one's end in the same way as the loss of autonomy entailed a rejection. Following this line of argument, it would not be unreasonable to suggest that Petrarch conceived of the *solitudo animi* as a form of mental subjectivism. Simply using a new term to describe a barely Christianised version of a classical idea, it seems fair to suggest that the *solitudo animi* was an intellectual detachment from the affairs of others, a sense of psychological oneness which evokes Seneca's belief that 'no man should glory in anything except that which is his own'.¹⁴⁸

A Stoic/Epicurean reading of Petrarch's *solitudo animi* is not unattractive. Although it may have been applied differently from the intentions of its original authors, such a 'classical' understanding of the *solitudo animi* would have allowed Petrarch the conceptual flexibility to transcend the literalism of the contrast between *rus* and *urbs*, while still remaining true to the idea of a *vita contemplativa*. It would, moreover, have fitted not only with Petrarch's willingness to observe sorrow in rustic seclusion and virtue in urban surroundings, but also with his enthusiasm for rustic beauty.

Despite its appeal, however, such a reading of the *solitudo animi* is open to some question. Although the passages considered above are remarkable for the degree to which

¹⁴⁴ *De vita solitaria*, Z I, iii, 1; P I, iii; *Prose*, 318-20.

¹⁴⁵ *De vita solitaria*, Z I, iv, 9; P I, vi; *Prose*, 354, c.f. *Sen.* XVII, 2.

¹⁴⁶ *De vita solitaria*, Z I, iv, 9; P I, vi; *Prose*, 354, referring to Dante, *Par.* I, 5-6.

¹⁴⁷ Zeitlin, 'Introduction', 57.

¹⁴⁸ Tripet, *Pétrarque ou la connaissance de soi*, 41-2.

Petrarch's treatment of *res aliena* appears to reproduce elements of the Stoic and Epicurean critiques of the *vita activa*, this interpretation omits to take full account of the broader system of moral philosophy which forms the context of the discussion.

As we have already observed, Petrarch explained the condition of the *occupatus* as the product of his failure to understand the true aim of man. 'Truly,' Petrarch wrote,

we who are accustomed to show the correct path to others ... [are] the blind led by the blind, are carried off along precipitous ways, and revolve around another's example, unaware of what we might desire; for – so that I may pursue my undertaking – an ignorance of our end (*finis*) creates all this evil, whether our own, or more particularly of all people. Imprudent men do not know what they should do; and so whatever they do turns to nausea as soon as they have begun.¹⁴⁹

The end of which '*inconsulti homines*' are ignorant is identified as lying with Christ. In the very first lines of the *De vita solitaria*¹⁵⁰ and again at Z I, iv, 9, Petrarch affirmed that all men had been created by Christ 'to that end that we might find peace in [Him].'¹⁵¹ Notwithstanding certain structural similarities with classical thought, Petrarch's elaboration of this theme contains no trace of Stoicism or Epicureanism and the echoes of Augustine's *Confessiones* in the identification of the true end of man at Z I, iv, 9 already hints at the source of inspiration for his understanding of the *solitudo animi*.¹⁵²

The condition of the unhappy *occupatus* is described variously as a terrible mental confusion,¹⁵³ and a contagion of the mind.¹⁵⁴ Following St. Augustine's argument in the *De vera religione*, Petrarch makes it clear that this confusion is centred upon a failure to recognise the foolishness of seeking contentment in the worldly. Pursuing pleasure as much in old age as in his youth,¹⁵⁵ the *occupatus* lives as if he had been born for his belly and gives himself up to the flesh.¹⁵⁶ So enamoured, indeed, were such people of their enthusiasms that at disputations they would proudly ask what would be done if sleep, sex, food and drink were taken away from them, and would even query the value of a life without such

¹⁴⁹ *De vita solitaria*, Z I, vi, 4; P I, viii: 'Nempe qui aliis iter rectum ostendere solebamus... ceci cecis ducibus, per abrupta rapimur alienoque circumvolvimur exemplo, quid velimus nescii; nam, ut ceptum exequar, totum hoc malum, seu nostrum proprium, seu potius omnium gentium commune, ignoratio finis facit. Nesciunt inconsulti homines quid agant; ideo quicquid agunt, mox ut ceperint, vergit in nauseam...' referring to Matt. 15:14; *Prose*, 394.

¹⁵⁰ *De vita solitaria*, Z I, i, 1; P I, I; *Prose*, 296.

¹⁵¹ *De vita solitaria*, Z I, iv, 9; P I, vi: '... quamquam, bone Iesu, ad hunc finem creati abs te ut in te requiescamus, ad hoc nati et sine hoc inutiliter atque infelicitate nati sumus...' referring to Dante, *Par.* I, 5-6; *Prose*, 354.

¹⁵² Augustine, *Conf.* I, i.

¹⁵³ *De vita solitaria*, Z I, vi, 1; P I, viii; *Prose*, 380.

¹⁵⁴ *De vita solitaria*, Z I, iii, 4; P I, iii; *Prose*, 328.

¹⁵⁵ *De vita solitaria*, Z I, vi, 2; P I, viii; *Prose*, 382.

¹⁵⁶ *De vita solitaria*, Z I, vi, 1; P I, viii; *Prose*, 382.

enjoyments.¹⁵⁷ For all his abandon and apparent pride, however, the *occupatus* is inevitably unsatisfied, troubled, tired and worried: despite his public satisfaction, he admits to himself that he does not know where to turn.¹⁵⁸ This combination of wanton worldliness and dissatisfaction is no surprise to Petrarch, who follows St. Augustine in observing a paradox at the heart of such a lifestyle. In committing himself to bodily pleasures, the *occupatus* enters a vicious circle: hunger, thirst and carnal desires may temporarily be relieved, but cannot ever fully be satisfied, since the urge will return as long as he lives. The busy man fails to recognise that contentment can be found only by relinquishing such desires, not by vainly pursuing and unattainable satiety. “Those people for whom the health of the body is vile,” Petrarch writes, quoting the *De vera religione* directly

“would prefer to eat than to be satisfied, and would rather enjoy their passions than to suffer no such excitement; there may even be found those who would rather sleep than not sleep; [but] at the same time, the object of all this pleasure is not to hunger and thirst, and not to desire congress, and not for fatigue to come to the body.” Not long after this, [Augustine] writes: “Those who wish to thirst, to hunger, to burn with lust and to grow tired, so that they may freely eat, drink, copulate and sleep” ... he does not say: they love misery and sorrow – no-one is so averse to health that they love the name of sorrow and misery –, but “they love,” he says, “indigence, which is the beginning of the greatest sorrows.” It is clear that, just as the effect is in the cause, so the love of the effect is contained in the love of the cause; thus [Augustine] concludes terribly: “In them shall be perfected that which they love, so that lamentation and the grinding of teeth shall fall unto them.” You see that he deduces the effect from the cause: since they love indigence, they shall find misery. ... Hence the hatred of life, hence the root of weariness, hence that inquietude of mind, than which a mortal man may suffer nothing worse while he lives.¹⁵⁹

Vainly pursuing his desires, and experiencing an inevitable dissatisfaction, the *occupatus* fails to recognise the transience of this life, and omits to realise that it is simply a lodging and not a home.¹⁶⁰ In loving only fleeting things, he does not appreciate the implications of his own mortality and fails to understand that he has been promised an immortal life in the

¹⁵⁷ *De vita solitaria*, Z I, vi, 1; P I, viii; *Prose*, 382.

¹⁵⁸ *De vita solitaria*, Z I, vi, 1; P I, viii; *Prose*, 380, quoting Terence, *Eunuchus*, 73.

¹⁵⁹ *De vita solitaria*, Z I, vi, 2; P I, viii: ‘De his in libro *De vera religione* Augustinus: “Quibus” inquit “vilis est corporis salus, malunt vesci quam satiari, et malunt frui genitalibus quam nullam talem commotionem pati; inveniuntur etiam qui malint dormire quam non dormire; cum omnis illius voluptatis finis sit non esurire ac sitire, et non desiderare concubitus, et non esse fatigato corpore.” Nec longe post: “Qui sitire” inquit “et esurire volunt et in libidinem ardescere et defatigari, ut libenter edant et bibant et concumbant et dormiant” ... non dixit: amant miseriam et dolorem – nemo est enim tam aversus a salute ut doloris et miserie nomen amet –, sed “amant” inquit “indigentiam, que est initium summorum dolorum.” Constat autem, sicut effectus in causis, sic in amore causarum amorem effectuum contineri; itaque concludens terribiliter: “perficietur ergo” inquit “in eis quod amant, ut eis ibi sit ploratus et stridor dentium.” Vides ut ex causa effectum elicit: quia amarunt indigentiam, miseriam consequentur. ... Hinc vite odium, hinc tedii radix, hinc illa inquietudo animi, qua nil peius patitur mortalis homo dum vivit.’ *Prose*, 384, quoting Augustine, *De vera religione*, liii, 102; liv, 104

¹⁶⁰ *De vita solitaria*, Z I, iv, 9; P I, vi; *Prose*, 356.

company of God after death in which all longings and wants are satisfied, a fact well known to the *solitarius*.¹⁶¹

In this life, Petrarch contends, real happiness can only be had in the apprehension of the truth of a man's nature – the truth of his mortality and of the perfection of the immortal life which has been promised to his soul. Indeed, Petrarch asserts that if a person were to see into the heart of those orators whom the crowds admire, he would recognise that temporal happiness consists in the inward possession of the truth, and not in any of the deeds or things to which *occupati* commonly aspire.¹⁶² Observing the overlap between Cicero's philosophy and Augustine's theology, Petrarch suggests that this truth – latent in all people in the sense that Christ is present within everyone – can only be apprehended with the suppression of the senses and the application of reason.¹⁶³ Directly following St. Augustine's *De vera religione*, Petrarch once more clarified that the *occupatus*' 'contagion of mind' is an 'illness' only insofar as he improperly attached himself to phantasms accessible to the senses rather than to the truth apprehensible through reason.¹⁶⁴

Although Petrarch describes his rustic sorrow in very different terms in the *Canzoniere*, his understanding of the cause of his personal sense of dissatisfaction and inquietude displays an exact parallelism with his explanation for the unhappiness and discontentment of the *occupatus* in the *De vita solitaria*. Despite emulating the imagery and style of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*¹⁶⁵ and Virgil's bucolic verse, Petrarch subsumes the treatment of his unrequited love into an identifiably Augustinian meta-theme.¹⁶⁶ Indeed, as Sara Sturm-Maddox has put it, 'Petrarch's representations of amorous psychology ... are

¹⁶¹ *De vita solitaria*, Z I, iv, 7, P I, v; Prose, 346-8, referring to Ps. 54:16; c.f. Augustine, *De vera religione*, liii, 103.

¹⁶² *De vita solitaria*, Z I, iii, 3; P I, iii; Prose, 326, quoting Cicero, *Tusc.*, I, xvi, 37-8.

¹⁶³ *De vita solitaria*, Z I, iv, 8; P I, v; Prose, 352; Z I, vi, 6; P I, ix; Prose, 400; Z I, v, 5; P I, vii; Prose, 378.

¹⁶⁴ *De vita solitaria*, Z I, vi, 2; P I, viii; Prose, 382-4; c.f. Augustine, *De vera religione*, liv, 104.

¹⁶⁵ On Petrarch's use of Ovidian motifs, see, for example de Nolhac, *Pétrarque et l'humanisme*, 1:176-80; P. Blanc, 'La poétique de la métamorphose chez Pétrarque,' in G. Demerson, ed., *Poétiques de la Métamorphose*, (Saint-Etienne, 1981), 37-51; D. Dutschke, *Francesco Petrarca: Canzone XXIII from First to Final Version*, (Ravenna, 1977), 78-221; S. Sturm Maddox, *Petrarch's Metamorphoses. Text and Subtext in the "Rime Sparse"*, (Columbia, MO, 1985), 9-38; P. Hainsworth, *Petrarch the Poet. An Introduction to the Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*, (London and New York, 1988), 85-6, 134, 138-40, 187-8, 210. For Petrarch's knowledge of the medieval commentary tradition, see Calcaterra, *Nella selva del Petrarca*, 38-40. Also of interest is the relationship between Laura and Daphne in the *Canzoniere*, for which see, for example, Bernardo, *Petrarch, Laura and the "Triumphs"*, 27; M. Cottino-Jones, 'The Myth of Apollo and Daphne in Petrarch's *Canzoniere*: The Dynamics and Literary Function of Transformation,' in A. Scaglione, ed., *Francis Petrarca, Six Centuries Later*, (Chapel Hill, NC and Chicago, 1975), 152-76; P.R.J. Hainsworth, 'The Myth of Daphne in the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*,' *Italian Studies* 34 (1979): 28-44; U. Dotti, 'Il mito dafneo,' *Convivium* 32 (1969): 9-23.

¹⁶⁶ On the relationship between Ovidian (and stilnovist) themes and Augustinianism in the *Canzoniere*, see, for example, Sturm-Maddox, *Petrarch's Metamorphoses*, 97f; D. Diani, 'Pétrarque: Canzoniere 132,' *Revue des Etudes Italiennes* 18 (1973): 111-67.

imprinted with Augustinian formulations,¹⁶⁷ and there is a strong sense that Petrarch not only recognised, but also advertised St. Augustine's assertion of the opposition of worldly desires and the apprehension of the soul's true end through the use of reason.¹⁶⁸

Petrarch's appropriation of Augustinian moral theology in explaining his sorrow in the *Canzoniere* is most apparent in *Canz.* 264, written during his third period of residence at Vacluse (late 1345 – 20th November 1347).¹⁶⁹ This poem, which takes the form of an imagined dialogue between Petrarch and an inner voice,¹⁷⁰ is inspired by a consciousness of the proximity of death¹⁷¹ and concentrates on the foolishness of worldly love. Speaking of his love for Laura, the inner voice reminds Petrarch that he has been 'tired and disgusted by the false fleeting sweetness which the treacherous world gives' and asks him why he places his hopes in temporal affections.¹⁷² The continuation of such desires is not merely likely to bring him no peace,¹⁷³ the voice implies, but is also certain to imperil his soul. Laura set Petrarch's heart afire, but he must remember that if he found some measure of happiness among such ills in the transitory world, the heavens contain a happiness which is '*immortal et adorno*'.¹⁷⁴ In comparison to the eternal life, the pleasures of the mortal world are an illusory obstruction.

Speaking using his own voice in the verse, Petrarch uses words which affirm the transience and falsehood of worldly desires. His temporal affections are '*ombre*' (l.72), while he caricatures himself as '*[un] uom che sogna*' (l.88) and depicts his vision as being clouded by '*lo corporeo velo*' (l.114).¹⁷⁵ At the same time, however, he also indicates that he feels

¹⁶⁷ Sturm-Maddox, *Petrarch's Metamorphoses*, 104.

¹⁶⁸ Durling, 'Introduction' to *Petrarch's Lyric Poems*, trans. and ed. Durling, 20-21.

¹⁶⁹ For the dating of this verse see Wilkins, *The Making of the "Canzoniere"*, 347-60.

¹⁷⁰ *Canz.* 264, l.19.

¹⁷¹ *ibid.*, l.5.

¹⁷² *ibid.*, ll.27-30:

' "Se già è gran tempo fastidita et lassa
se' di quel falso dolce fuggitivo
che 'l mondo traditor può dare altrui,
a che ripon' più la speranza in lui'

trans. Durling, 426.

¹⁷³ *Canz.* 264., l.31.

¹⁷⁴ *ibid.*, ll. 45-54:

' "Ella l'acesse, et se l'ardor fallace
durò molt'anni in aspettando un giorno
che per nostra salute unqua non vene,
or ti solleva a più beata spene
mirando 'l ciel che ti si volve intorno
immortal et adorno;
ché dove del mal suo qua giù si lieta
vostra vaghezza acqueta
un mover d'occhi, un ragionar, un canto,
quanto fia quel piacer, se questo è tanto?"'

c.f. *Secretum*, prohem.; *Prose*, 22.

¹⁷⁵ On the image of '*lo corporeo velo*', which recurs throughout the *Canzoniere*, see D. Marks, 'The Veil and the Knot: Petrarch's Humanist Poetics,' in J. M. Hill and D. M. Sinnreich-Levi, eds., *The*

unable to renounce his worldly love for the woman who circumscribed his steps on heaven and on earth.¹⁷⁶ In the opening stanza, he introduces the image of the crucified Christ's outstretched arms, ready to receive him mercifully, but states that he felt fearful of following the example of others, and sensed another force spurring him on.¹⁷⁷ A thought '*dolce et agro*' is enshrined within his soul, pressing on his heart with desire and putting it to graze on hope.¹⁷⁸ This thought has grown in Petrarch since his youth and will, he suspects, drag him to the grave.¹⁷⁹ Although he wishes to 'embrace the truth' and to 'abandon the shadows', his love for Laura leads him to forget his own best interests and draws him away from virtue.¹⁸⁰ This is clearly expressed in the second half of the poem, in a passage in which Petrarch combines an allusion to Ovid with a distinctly Augustinian treatment of the opposition of desire to reason:

For in the manner of a man who dreams
I have death before my eyes,
and [though] I want to mount a defence, I have no weapons.

That which I do I see, and a poorly understood truth
does not deceive me,¹⁸¹ [but] rather Love forces me
who never allows anyone
that believes him too much follow the path of honour
[...]

[He] who loves a mortal thing with such faith
as ought to belong to God alone –
the more he desires honour, the more it is forbidden to him.
And this with a loud voice still recalls
[my] reason, led astray after the senses;¹⁸²

Rhetorical Poetics of the Middle Ages: Reconstructive Polyphony. Essays in Honor of Robert O. Payne, (London, 2000), 241-57.

¹⁷⁶ *Canz.* 127, 193. For an interesting, but incomplete discussion of this point, see Sturm-Maddox, *Petrarch's Metamorphoses*, 100-1, 108-9.

¹⁷⁷ *Canz.* 264, ll.9-18.

¹⁷⁸ *Canz.* 264, ll.55-8:

'Da l'altra parte un pensiero dolce et agro,
con faticosa e dilettevol salma
sedendosi entro l'alma,
preme 'l cor di desio, di speme il pasce'.

¹⁷⁹ *ibid.*, ll.63-5 The idea of sinfulness growing from youth appears to echo the sentiments of Augustine, *Conf.* I, vii; II, i-ii.

¹⁸⁰ *Canz.* 264, ll.72-80:

'vorre' 'l ver abbracciar, lassando l'ombre.
Ma quell' altro voler di ch' i' son pieno
quanti press' a lui nascon par ch' adugge,
et parte il tempo fugge
che scrivendo d'altrui di me non calme;
e 'l lume de' begli occhi che mi strugge
soavemente al suo caldo sereno
mi ritien con un freno
contra cui nullo ingegno o forza valme.'

¹⁸¹ c.f. Ovid, *Met.* VII, 92-3. On which connection, Hainsworth, *Petrarch the Poet*, 85-6.

¹⁸² c.f. Augustine, *De doctrina christiana*, I, 77-80, on which see Sturm-Maddox, *Petrarch's Metamorphoses*, 101.

but although [reason] hears and thinks
to return, its bad habit drives it further¹⁸³
and depicts for my eyes
her who was born only to make me die,
because me and herself she pleased too much.¹⁸⁴

This fills Petrarch with a sense of helplessness and grief, and the poem as a whole is shot through with the feeling of woeful paralysis and self-deception. Terms expressing confusing, conflict and sorrow occur throughout the verse: self pity (*una pieta ... forte*, l.2), tears and sighing (*lagrimar*, l.4; *sospiro ... lagrimar*, l.10), an allegorical fall (*chi possendo star cadde*, l.12), fear (*temeza*, l.16), trembling (*tremor*, l.17) all occur in the first stanza, while words communicating instability and intranquillity dominate the second. This infuses Petrarch's poetic character with a sense of desperation which is transformed into a plea for help that again has an Augustinian flavour. In the opening lines, Petrarch reveals that he has fruitlessly begged God for 'those wings with which our intellect lifts itself from this mortal prison to Heaven.'¹⁸⁵ At the close of the verse, the supplications of the past are renewed and, with Death by his side, Petrarch seeks 'new counsel' for his life, unable to lay hold of the good which he sees.¹⁸⁶

Petrarch's treatment of the unhappiness of the *occupatus* in the *De vita solitaria* and analysis of his own sorrow in the *Canzoniere* diverges from Stoic and Epicurean thought. As

¹⁸³ c.f. Augustine, *Conf.* VII, xvii. Compare also the role of 'bad habits' in Augustine, *Conf.* II, viii; VI, xii. It is worth noting that Augustine differed from classical authors in seeing *consuetudine* as contrary to the pursuit of virtue. On 'habit' in Augustine's moral theology, see J. Prediville, 'The Development of the Idea of Habit in the Thought of Saint Augustine,' *Traditio* 28 (1972): 29-99.

¹⁸⁴ *Canz.* 264, ll.88-94, 99-108: 'Ché 'n guisa d'uom che sogna
aver la morte inanzi gli occhi parme,
et vorrei far difesa et non ò l'arme.
Quel ch' i' fo veggio, et non m'inganna il vero
mal conosciuto, anzi mi sforza Amore
che la strada d'onore
mai nol lassa seguir chi troppo il crede
[...]

Ché mortal cosa amar con tanta fede
quanta a Dio sol per debito convensi
più si disdice a chi più pregio brama.
Et questo ad alta voce anco richiama
la ragione sviata dietro ai sensi;
ma perch' ell' oda et pensi
tornare, il mal costume oltre la spigne
et adli occhi depigne
quella she sol per farmi morir nacque,
perch' a me troppo et a se stessa piacque.'
¹⁸⁵ *ibid.*, ll.5-8: 'ché vedendo ogni giorno il fin più presso,
mille fiate ò chieste a Dio quel' ale
co le quai del mortale
carcer nostr' intelletto al Ciel si leva.'

Note the reference to 'mortale carcer'; c.f. Boethius, *Cons. Phil.*, II, pr. 6, 23.

¹⁸⁶ *Canz.* 264, ll.133-6.

we have seen, in contrast to both schools of philosophy, Petrarch understood the condition of the busy man to be the result of his attachment to worldly desires and failure to recognise that contentment may only be found in God. Petrarch further explained that true happiness could only be found by shunning corporeal desires and by attaining to the truth of Christ and the soul through reason. Clearly rejecting the scepticism intrinsic to Stoic philosophy and the emphasis on pleasure which defined Epicurean thought, Petrarch's examination of the *occupatus*' condition seems to derive from a reading of the early works of St. Augustine, especially the *De vera religione*, a reference which is stated explicitly.¹⁸⁷ While this is in itself a significant point – a point which shall be discussed further later in this chapter – it is particularly relevant to Petrarch's treatment of *res aliena* in that it allows an understanding of the nature of his relationship with this apparently Stoic/Epicurean theme and contextualises his use of ostensibly classical motifs.

Although Zeitlin and Tripet are quite correct to draw attention to Petrarch's assertion that those who involve themselves in others' affairs do not know where their true end lies, it is perhaps misleading to suggest that this is reflective of an assimilation of the Stoic/Epicurean critique of the *vita activa* or to infer that it testifies to a subjectivism of similar provenance. Whereas the Stoics and Epicureans each affirmed that an involvement in other people's affairs would inevitably *cause* confusion and anxiety, Petrarch's treatment of *res aliena* indicates that such an involvement is actually a *symptom* of the *occupatus*' unhappiness.

The symptomatic nature of *res aliena* is apparent in Petrarch's treatment of the theme at Z I, vi, 2. Since worldly pleasure and the ignorance of the soul's true nature inevitably lead to dissatisfaction and insecurity, Petrarch found it unsurprising that *occupati* waver in their actions, undertaking task after task in vain hope.¹⁸⁸ Always unsatisfied, these men are cheerful one moment, depressed the next, and as a result, alter everything with a relentless regularity. One day, they wear a garment which reaches the ground, but the next they put on something too scantily cut; they change their manners, their written style, and even their speech without a second thought.¹⁸⁹ 'Without doubt, having brought them in, nothing more than precipitous and importunate imitation,' Petrarch continued in the following chapter,

¹⁸⁷ Gerosa observes – with reference to Augustine's commentary on John's Gospel – that '[l]a solitudine di cui parla Agostino è veramente quella che intende il Petrarca' but the Augustinian roots of the *De vita solitaria* are not examined in detail. Gerosa, *Umanesimo cristiano del Petrarca*, 142.

¹⁸⁸ *De vita solitaria*, Z I, vi, 2; P I, viii; *Prose*, 384-6.

¹⁸⁹ *De vita solitaria*, Z I, vi, 2; P I, viii; *Prose*, 386.

never content to be constrained by limits, has nourished and magnified these odious and horrid good-for-nothings. For how is it possible for those people to remain fixed on the same uninterrupted course of living who do not subject themselves to being ruled by virtue, by their better judgement, or to being governed by the advice of friends, but to emulation, to being whirled about by the madness of others and the frenzies of the stupid? In short, those who set aside their true nature, abandon the *mores* of their forefathers, [and] venerate nothing except the alien and the foreign ought to change as often as they admire something which presents itself. There is no rule to the changing, since there is no rule to imitation; everything of another's pleases them, everything of their own displeases them; they would rather be anything than what they are...¹⁹⁰

Having rejected virtue and their better judgement, the *occupati* subject themselves to a corporeal world which can never satisfy them. They continually chase after something that they can never attain and, while accruing sin, seem at the same time to be tortured by a sorrowful melancholy. It is not that *res aliena* necessarily distracts them from virtue, as the Stoics and Epicureans had suggested; rather, it is the *occupati*'s alienation from virtue which drives them towards *res aliena*, as St. Augustine had argued in the *De vera religione*.

Petrarch's willingness to subsume his treatment of *res aliena* into an early-Augustinian explanation of the *occupatus*' unhappiness is mirrored by his description of the condition of the *solitarius*. Once again, his often circumlocutory and rhetorical descriptions of the *solitudo animi* conceal an appreciable departure from classical notions of the *vita contemplativa*.

In examining St. Augustine as an exemplar of solitude in the second book of the *De vita solitaria*, Petrarch concentrates on the saint's time in Milan just prior to his retreat to Cassiciacum in September 386.¹⁹¹ There, shut away in a secret corner of the garden, 'sobbing and crying', the saint 'tore his hair and beat his chest' while he battled with his inner self, desperate to find some respite from his grief.¹⁹² Finally, Augustine realised that which was to be of delight to him for ever after. 'Expounding St. John's Gospel,' Petrarch wrote,

[St. Augustine] says: 'It is difficult to see Christ in a crowd: a certain solitude is needed for our mind, [since] God is seen with a particular solitude of intention.

¹⁹⁰ *De vita solitaria*, Z I, vi, 3; P I, viii: 'Nimirum has odiosas et inamenas nugas nichil magis quam preceps et importuna nec suis unquam contenta finibus invexit imitatio, invectasque aluit auxitque. Quomodo enim fieri potest, ut vivendi tenor idem maneat his qui non se virtuti, non suo iudicio, non amicorum consiliis regendos, sed emulatione, sed aliene dementie stultorumque furoribus se volvendos tradunt? Denique qui naturam propriam exuunt, patrios mores abiciunt, nichil nisi peregrinum atque adventitium venerantur, totiens mutantur oportet, quotiens aliquid occurrerit quod mirentur. Nullus itaque mutandi, quia nullus imitandi modus: cuncta illis aliena placent, sua omnia displicent, quidlibet esse malint quam quod sunt...' *Prose*, 388.

¹⁹¹ *De vita solitaria*, Z II, iii, 5; P II, iv, pp.438-40. See Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 69-120.

¹⁹² *De vita solitaria*, Z II, iii, 5; P II, iv: 'Ubi amarissime secum loquens, inter singultus et lacrimas, inter vulsum capillum percussamque frontem et consertis digitis amplexum genu, et quecunque magnus ac sanctus dolor elicit, tandem semel de se statuit unde in perpetuum exultaret.' *Prose*, 440, referring to Augustine, *Conf.* VIII, viii, 20.

A crowd is noisy; that vision requires privacy.' You hear how cautiously he says that nothing except a solitude of application is necessary to see God, intending to mean that, while the human mind has within itself crowds and disturbance, physical solitude contributes nothing to the sharpening and purifying of the eyes for such a light.¹⁹³

Clearly repeating the separation of *solitudo loci* and *solitudo animi*, this passage provides a telling comment on the latter. The solitude which St. Augustine himself embodied was not a physical seclusion, but rather a privacy of mind. He was, Petrarch suggests, able to see God more clearly by putting aside the mental disturbances associated with a preoccupation with the physical world.

The image of sight, which has a parallel in the language of the *Soliloquies*,¹⁹⁴ is developed further to forge a direct connection between the *solitudo animi*, the apprehension of truth, and the application of reason. That *felicitas* consisted in the inward possession of *veritas*,¹⁹⁵ Petrarch had no doubt, but this was a matter of 'seeing' Christ within the self.¹⁹⁶ The 'sight' of truth, however, was directly impeded by a dependence on the bodily senses. Observing a certain parallelism between Cicero and St. Augustine, Petrarch affirmed that it takes a powerful intellect to free the mind from the senses.¹⁹⁷ The inner Christ could only be 'seen' only with the 'eyes' of the intellect, and only with reason could truth be recognised. This use of reason is intrinsic to Petrarch's understanding of the *solitudo animi*. 'Now you understand,' he wrote, addressing Philippe de Cabassoles,

to whom I refer all that has been said or ought to be said about solitude. But, since it is not given to all people to excel either by sanctity or by scholarship, [or] by distinguished *otium* to merit the love and recognition of posterity, so that neither present glory nor the fame of ages to come – for which many have voluntarily poured out their lives and in return have become famous – ought to elicit excitement, how much use is it to you ... that this briefest (*quantuluncunq*) period of life, for which no hope of recalling and repairing remains once it has fled, is yours? Moreover, no person with moderate learning is forbidden from acquiring through reflection and reading a mind which is healthy, sustained by peaceful concerns and unimpeded by the chains of [worldly] things, subject to God and to reason, but in other respects free, and also a body brought away from its heavy yoke and serving only the mind...¹⁹⁸

¹⁹³ *De vita solitaria*, Z II, iii, 5; P II, iv: 'Is ergo evangelium Iohannis exponens: "Difficile est" inquit "in turba videre Christum: solitudo quedam necessaria est menti nostre, quadam solitudine intentionis videtur Deus. Turba strepitum habet; visio ista secretum desiderat." Audis ut caute videndo Deo necessariam non quamlibet sed solitudinem dixit intentionis, intelligi volens, dum suas intus turbas tumultusque suos humana mens habeat, acuendis ad tantum lumen purgandisque oculis solitudinem corpoream nil prodesse.' *Prose*, 440, quoting Augustine, *In Iohannis Evangelium*, P.L. 35, col. 1533.

¹⁹⁴ Augustine, *Soliloquies*, I, 12.

¹⁹⁵ *De vita solitaria*, Z I, iii, 3; P I, iii; *Prose*, 326.

¹⁹⁶ *De vita solitaria*, Z I, iv, 8; P I, v; *Prose*, 350-2.

¹⁹⁷ *De vita solitaria*, Z I, iv, 8; P I, v; *Prose*, 352, quoting Cicero, *Tusc.* I, xvi, 37; I, xvi, 38.

¹⁹⁸ *De vita solitaria*, Z I, v, 4; P I, vii: 'Iam intelligis ad quos quecunque de solitudine dicta seu dicenda sunt referam. Verum quia non omnibus est datum vel sanctitate vel literis excellere, preclaroque otio posteritatis amorem ac notitiam promereri, ut nec presens gloria nec sequentis evi

Despite some superficial similarities with Stoic and Epicurean thought, therefore, it does not seem unjustified to suggest that Petrarch's understanding of the *solitudo animi* was at some remove from the notion of a *vita contemplativa* he would have encountered in his sources for classical philosophy. Whereas the *vita contemplativa* was conceived as a pursuit of philosophy in opposition to the idea of a *vita activa*, itself defined in terms of the anxiety arising from involvement in *res aliena*, Petrarch's *solitudo animi* was based on a moral theology apparently derived from St. Augustine's early works which understood the pursuit of *felicitas* and the cause of unhappiness in quite different terms. As we have seen, the unhappiness of the *occupatus* sprang from his fruitless attachment to temporalities, and ignorance of his true end and of true happiness. His involvement in other people's affairs was just one manifestation of this reliance on corporeal things and false belief that satiety could be found in a fleeting world. In Petrarch's analysis, as in that of St. Augustine, he could only overcome his sorrow by forsaking his senses for the intellect, and using his reason to recognise the truth of his own nature, the truth that the *vera felicitas* lay in Christ alone. Consequently, in opposition to the classical notion of the *vita contemplativa*, Petrarch uses the term '*solitudo animi*' to describe the condition of the person who had renounced the errors and sorrows of the *occupatus*. The person who possessed a *solitudo animi* paid no heed to corporeal things, exercised his reason, recognised the truth that his end and the one happiness lay only in Christ. He lived, in every sense, as a pilgrim in the world, observing his surroundings at a mental distance, paying no heed to the physical. He possessed a solitude of the mind in the sense that his intellect was uncrowded by the effects of corporeal desires, and could exist in the world almost oblivious to its many fleeting allurements.

6. Petrarch and the countryside

Although Petrarch associates the *solitudo animi* with a person's interior condition, and stresses the primacy of the *solitudo animi* over the *solitudo loci*, it is nevertheless hard to ignore the fact that he places a high emphasis on rusticity in his treatment of solitude. As we have already seen, Petrarch's sensitivity for natural beauty heavily informs his description of the solitary life he enjoyed at Vacluse, and played a significant part in the invitations he

fama sollicitet, pro qua multi vitam voluntarie profuderunt et ob id ipsum clari sunt habitati, quanti facias ... hoc quantulumcunque vite tempus, cuius cum semel effluerit recolligendi reparandique spes nulla relinquitur, tuum esse? quodque nulli mediocriter erudito vetitum est, cogitando saltem legendoque placidis folum curis et rerum vinculis explicitum animum habere, Deo et ratione subditum, cetera liberum; corpus quoque gravi iugo eductum animoque soli serviens ... ' *Prose*, 376-8.

extended to friends in the *Familiares*. Similarly, natural imagery is an intrinsic part of the contrast between *rus* and *urbs* in the *De vita solitaria* and the beauty and tranquillity of the countryside are integral to the life of the *solitarius*. This stress on the countryside raises questions not merely about the separation of the *solitudo animi* and the *solitudo loci*, but also about the relationship between Petrarch's apparently Augustinian moral philosophy and his use of classical source materials. On the one hand, the reader is obliged to ask why, if true solitude was a purely internal condition, Petrarch persisted with such a marked enthusiasm for the rural environment and gave such prominence to the countryside in describing solitude. On the other hand, although there is no evidence to suggest that either Stoic or Epicurean philosophers based their exhortations to rural retreat on a sensitivity for natural beauty, the role played by natural imagery in Petrarch's writings clearly has antecedents in classical literature and the priority this is accorded must be queried.

In the most general sense, Petrarch's manipulation of the *rus-urbs* contrast may be seen as a convenient means of representing the internal conditions of the *occupatus* and the *solitarius*. Although the physicality of city and countryside do not themselves contribute to the unhappiness of the one and the contentment of the other, they act as a convenient means of depicting the moral status of the two figures. While the degradations and confusion of city life are not the cause of the *occupatus*' misery, his attachment to them reflects his inner insecurity and improper desires. By the same token, the tranquillity of the countryside cannot be viewed as the predicate of the *solitarius*' peace, his retreat to the fields and murmuring streams is an expression of his disinterest in the pleasures of the town.

That is not, however, to say that Petrarch envisaged the solitary man as living anywhere but the countryside. Rather than being the source of his contentment, his withdrawal to a rural environment appears to be a consequence of his inner condition. Having substituted reason for the senses, Petrarch seems to have foreseen that the *solitarius* would seek out country living as the setting most congenial to his state of mind and moral condition. The river banks and woodland groves do not appear to enhance his state, but rather the *solitarius* finds such a place appropriate to his position. It is for this reason that, at the very beginning of the *De vita solitaria*, Petrarch stressed that he did not seek to praise the name of solitude, but the good things which are proper to solitude: far from hating men, he merely despised sin, especially his own.¹⁹⁹ Similarly, later in the text, he speaks of his desire to escape the crowd because of a discrepancy of tastes, or perhaps because of his wish to avoid cultivating gossipous witnesses to his life.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁹ *De vita solitaria*, Z I, i, 3; P I, I; *Prose*, 300.

²⁰⁰ *De vita solitaria*, I, iv, 8; P I, vi; *Prose*, 354.

While the separation of the solitude of mind and the solitude of place is preserved by the *solitarius*' general relationship with the countryside, however, two specific aspects of Petrarch's enthusiasm for the countryside merit further consideration. In addition to providing a convenient literary expression for the contrast between the *occupatus* and the *solitarius*, and furnishing the solitary man with an environment befitting his condition, Petrarch explicitly associates the countryside with both poetic composition and religious meditation. It is with respect to these two associations that the separation of the *solitudo animi* and the *solitudo loci*, and the role of classical literature must be questioned most carefully.

The identification of rustic retreat with literary endeavour and particularly with poetic composition runs throughout Petrarch's discussion of solitude. In the *Exul ab Italia*, he signalled the connection by highlighting the fact that in Vacluse he was in the company of the Muses,²⁰¹ and this is mirrored by the fact that, even tormented by love, he was able to 'gather now rhymes and verses, now herbs and flowers' in the *Canzoniere*.²⁰² Echoing the sentiments of the *Familiars*, Petrarch responded to Quintilian's views in the *De vita solitaria* by suggesting that provision should be made for access to woods and fields, and – 'what is especially pleasing to the Muses' – to the bank beside a murmuring stream, so that in such a setting one could sow the seeds of new projects in the field of genius.²⁰³

There are clearly classical parallels to be observed, and the associations – already noted – need not be laboured. The connection between rusticity and composition seem to point to Petrarch's willingness to borrow motifs from such sources as Virgil's bucolic verses and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Similarly, in *Ep.* II, 2, for example, Horace links the attractions of the countryside not merely with a freedom from cares,²⁰⁴ but also with a freedom for study and writing. All writers, he claims, despise the town and yearn for the 'sacred grove.'²⁰⁵

Despite the literary associations which Petrarch's pairing evokes, however, it would not necessarily be valid to assume from the repetition of imagery that his conception of solitude as an interior condition should be qualified by granting place a determining influence on a solitary life which involved composition. Far from conflicting with Petrarch's solitude, the image of the countryside as the home of the Muses may be seen to complement

²⁰¹ See n.55, above.

²⁰² *Canz.* 144, l.6: 'or rime e versi, or colgo erbette et fiore'.

²⁰³ *De vita solitaria* Z I, v, 1-2; P I, vii: 'Itaque si inter tantas voces audior consiliumque novum non despicitur, et hos sequor et, longius evectus, si loci optio integra est, scripturum novi aliquid admoneo, quotiens se exemplo Demosthenis includet, illud ante provisum sit ut, post secundos ingenii successus, egressu facili in silvas et loca virentia, quoque nichil est Musis amicus, queruli amnis in ripam gravedinem possit fatigationemque deponere...' *Prose*, 366.

²⁰⁴ Horace, *Ep.* II, 2, ll. 12-15.

²⁰⁵ *ibid.*, ll.77-80.

the distinction between the *solitudo animi* and the *solitudo loci*. There is no reason to doubt that Petrarch genuinely believed that the countryside was the most fitting place for poetic composition, and that the Muses indeed resided beside the murmuring streams. In approving of Quintilian's views in the *De vita solitaria*, Petrarch pointed out that while the genius of poets may flourish in any setting, it flourishes most readily in 'free and open places', as Virgil, Cicero and even St. Cyprian attested.²⁰⁶ This, however, was a part of a solitary life devoted to the active cultivation of virtue. In the same passage, Petrarch points out that poetic composition was 'an active rest and a restful work' and, in doing so, evokes the spirit of the opening chapters of the *De otio religioso*.²⁰⁷ The solitary man is still presented as seeking the peace of the countryside because it reflected his interior condition, but the poetic composition which he could also pursue in a rural environment is presented as an adjunct to his cultivation of virtue. Having spent his days composing verses in the fields and glades, Petrarch suggest that the *solitarius* could then return to the 'narrow and secret chamber' beloved of Demosthenes without having wasted any time or effort.²⁰⁸ Augustine himself, Petrarch observes, longed for 'vines and branches and leaves and reeds' and recognised that while they also befitted his virtue, they were also suitable for the profitable exercise of literary ability.²⁰⁹ Where a man has achieved the *solitudo animi*, Petrarch seems to infer, he could readily exercise his poetic talents in the countryside which reflected his inner condition as part of his pursuit of virtue. The classical motifs which Petrarch so willingly emulated thus supplement, rather than supplant his underlying moral philosophy.

Poetic composition, however, plays only a relatively minor role in the *De vita solitaria*. A far greater emphasis is placed on the rural landscape as the proper setting for religious meditation. As we have already noted, in the first book, the *solitarius* chooses the countryside as the location for his prayers, and reflects on the persons of the Trinity on a

²⁰⁶ *De vita solitaria*, Z I, v, 2; P I, vii: 'Equidem ut huic tandem articulo finem faciam, et Marcus Tullius et Virgilius Maro, quos eloquentie principes latine nemo eloquens negabit, huic consilio herebant; dum alter cum sepe alias tum presertim ad tractatum legum civilium accessurus, frondosas quercus et delectabiles secessus, quodque ibi scriptum memini "ripam et umbram", et procerissimas populos, et concentum avium, et strepitum fluviorum, atque equas in partes scissi amnis in medio insulam parvam et huic nostre simillimam quereret; alter autem suum Alexim, quisquis is est, pastorio carmine laudaturus, "inter densas umbrosa cacumina fagos" assidue veniens, solus in montibus et silvis id faceret ... Cyprianus, fide autem prior et martyrio clarus nec obscurus eloquio, tale quiddam et sensisse videtur et scripsisse...' quoting Cicero, *De legibus*, I, iv, 14; Virgil, *Ecl.*, II, 3 (arguably *Ecl.* II, 3-4: Petrarch gives '*assidue veniens*' for Virgil's '*assidue veniebat*'); *Prose*, 366-8.

²⁰⁷ *De vita solitaria*, Z I, v, 2; P I, vii: '... et actiosa requies et quietus labor ...'; *Prose*, 366.

²⁰⁸ *De vita solitaria*, Z I, v, 2; P I, vii: '... nec ideo minus in arum ingenii rerum semina iacere, et inter ipsum quietis reparandique animi tempus venturo labori materiam preparare, utile simul et iucundum opus, et actiosa requies et quietus labor, ut cum ad angustam illam Demosthenis ac secretam aream reditum fuerit, sententiarum sementem, inutilibus excussis, votiva verborum messis equiparet; atque ita nullum studio tempus iners aut inane preterfluat.' *Prose*, 366.

²⁰⁹ *De vita solitaria*, Z I, v, 2; P I, vii; *Prose*, 368.

hilltop or in a grassy meadow. In the second book, figures from Scripture in particular testify to the association. Abraham,²¹⁰ Jacob,²¹¹ Elijah²¹² and Moses²¹³ are all mentioned as having received the Lord and His angels in the simplicity of the countryside rather than in the splendid surroundings of the city. Speaking of Isaac's manner, Petrarch concludes that nowhere is more suitable for the meditative man than '*agrestis solitudo*'²¹⁴ and points out that while Christ had no need of solitude, He nevertheless sought out the countryside for both teaching and meditation.²¹⁵ Other personalities, such as Jerome, further evidence the connection. Feeling that it reflected his own experiences and preferences, the example of St. Bernard of Clairvaux was especially dear to Petrarch. St. Bernard is praised for having had no masters other than the oaks and beeches, and for having learned all the literature he knew in the woods and the fields. Writing in Vacluse, surrounded by his many books, Petrarch felt a particular sympathy with this holy example.²¹⁶

As with poetic composition, the association between religious meditation and the countryside is less firmly rooted in the classical emphasis on the importance of place than initially appears. Discussing exemplary figures from ancient history towards the end of the second book, Petrarch rhetorically questioned whether philosophers and poets of his own time and of ages yet to come would not shun cities and seek quiet seclusion. 'Often,' he went on to explain,

a place provides a stimulus for the mind; therefore an open and free [place] is to be wished for those who apply their mind – which the innumerable forms of vanity [to be found] among people weigh down and tear apart – to elevated matters, and [seeing that] the death which will come in finds a thousand ways in through the windows.²¹⁷

The precise wording of this passage is important and undermines the possible suggestion that it might call into question the separation of the *solitudo loci* and the *solitudo animi*. In contrast to the physics of Stoic and Epicurean moral philosophy, Petrarch declines to suggest that 'an open and free place' is related to the contemplation of 'elevated matters' in an exclusively causal fashion. Rather than 'an open and free place' serving as the predicate of

²¹⁰ *De vita solitaria*, Z II, ii, 3; *P II*, ii; *Prose*, 418-20.

²¹¹ *De vita solitaria*, Z II, ii, 5; *P II*, ii; *Prose*, 420-22.

²¹² *De vita solitaria*, Z II, ii, 7; *P II*, iii; *Prose*, 424-6.

²¹³ *De vita solitaria*, Z II, ii, 5; *P II*, iii; *Prose*, 422-4.

²¹⁴ *De vita solitaria*, Z II, ii, 4; *P II*, ii: 'Nullus enim locus, nulla pars etatis aptior meditati, quam et agrestis solitudo et, iuvenili fervore preterito relictisque, ut ita dixerim, a tergo meridianis horis, placationis vite tranquillitas iam vergentis ad vespem.' *Prose*, 422.

²¹⁵ *De vita solitaria*, Z II, v, 2; *P II*, x; *Prose*, 504.

²¹⁶ *De vita solitaria*, Z, II, iii, 14; *P II*, vii; *Prose*, 460-2.

²¹⁷ *De vita solitaria*, Z II, vii, 1; *P II*, xii: 'Sepe locus ingenio stimulos admovet; ideo apertus et liber optandus est his, qui animum rebus altis applicuere, quem in populis innumere vanitatum forme depriment atque discernunt, et mille vias per fenestras ingressura mors invenit.' *Prose*, 526.

meditation, Petrarch clearly states that such a location may stimulate the minds of those who already apply themselves to 'elevated matters'. The location is, in other words, congenial to the mental condition of the philosopher or poet who wishes to contemplate higher matters; it serves as a stimulus rather than as a cause. By the same token, the 'innumerable forms of vanity' which are found among people do not inevitably prevent the philosopher from applying his mind to 'higher matters', but they may stimulate his all-too human failings. In emphasising the position of 'those who apply their minds to elevated matters', Petrarch continues to place the moral autonomy of the agent and his interior condition at the very heart of solitude; the separation of the *solitudo animi* and the *solitudo loci* is preserved.

This is an impression which appears to be given credence in the rhetoric of praise which Petrarch deploys elsewhere in the second book. In a passage inserted at the suggestion of Giovanni degli Abbarbagliati, Grand Prior of the Camaldolese Order, and included many years after the *De vita solitaria* was begun, Petrarch recalled an episode from Peter Damian's hagiographical work on the founder of his order.²¹⁸ While still a young man, St. Romualdus would, it was said, often stop in the 'silent recesses of the woods' while hunting and 'transfixed, as though struck by a desire for heaven,' would exclaim

O what a delectable [place]. How tranquil and how opportune a location for those wishing to serve God! How much more happily the friends of God might live here than in the cities!²¹⁹

This quotation infers that those whose orientation is already known would find the 'silent recesses of the woods' an environment fitting for their endeavours and a respite in which they might actively continue their service of God. Again, the setting is congenial to the interior condition of the *amici Dei*, rather than a cause of their virtue. Petrarch carefully avoids suggestion that a life in the service of God was impossible in the city, but indicates that the rustic environment would better reflect their inward search for the divine. Indeed, it is perhaps apposite that Petrarch drew inspiration from the Camaldolese tradition, which combined both coenobitic and eremitic elements. For Romualdus, the whole world was a hermitage, but the countryside was nevertheless a congenial environment in which to serve God.²²⁰ Appropriately for Petrarch – who briefly sought to establish a quasi-monastic community at Vaucluse – Peter Damian also recorded that Romualdus was originally a lay-

²¹⁸ q.v. *Sen.* XVI, 3; Wilkins, *Life of Petrarch*, 231-2.

²¹⁹ *De vita solitaria*, Z II, iii, 16; P II, viii: 'Itaque dum venanti sepe taciti nemorum recessus occurrerent, celesti mox desiderio percussus herebat, atque ad se versus aiebat: "O quam delectabilis, quam tranquillus et quam Deo servire volentibus opportunus locus; quanto melius hic amici dei quam in urbibus habitarent.'" *Prose*, 464.

²²⁰ H. Leyser, *Hermits and the New Monasticism. A Study of Religious Communities in Western Europe 1000-1150* (London, 1984), 1, 25.

hermit who established religious societies in a rural setting for canons 'who had been living in a secular fashion ... to live together as a community.'²²¹

Although Petrarch's association of religious meditation and the countryside is not incompatible with the natural imagery of classical bucolic, it is similarly commensurate with the division between the *solitudo animi* and the *solitudo loci* which he developed out of his reading of St. Augustine's early moral theology. Presenting the countryside as an environment fitting to the outlook of a man who had suppressed desire and embraced reason in his pursuit of virtue, Petrarch was careful to ensure that prayer and contemplation were not portrayed as reliant on rural tranquillity, but rather as suited to the grassy fields and woodland groves. The primacy of the solitude of mind is assiduously preserved – often only subtly in delicately-worded, but telling phrases – and it appears clear that it is the inward peace of the solitary man which determines his appreciation of the natural world, rather than the beauty of the countryside which shapes his inner condition.

As Petrarch suggests in the many parallels he draws with patristic and medieval figures, this has a strong Christian heritage and it is perhaps not unexpected that his appreciation of the countryside should have complemented his description of true solitude in terms of the opposition of desire and reason. The idea of rustic retreat was, indeed, an important part of Christian thought from late Antiquity to the foundation of the mendicant orders in the central Middle Ages. Although for the desert fathers, the pursuit of holiness was often to be associated with an ascetic life in a barren environment, other traditions of observance drew from classical thought an affection for the natural world, but transforming it into the delight in a setting which reflected inner peace and the celebration of God's creation. As we have already seen, through his reading of the *De doctrina Christiana*, Petrarch himself observed that St. Augustine saw an affinity between inward peace and verdant surroundings. Garden imagery runs through the *Confessiones*, and it is important to note – as Petrarch so clearly identified – that Augustine depicts one of the defining moments in his religious development as occurring in the green and peaceful garden in Milan. It is, moreover, tempting to speculate that the utility of rusticity might have had a parallel in the thought of St. Francis of Assisi – so important in Petrarch's description of the *solitudo animi* – for whom the countryside was a favoured place for prayer and reflection, even though his mendicant life led him often to cities. Perhaps more so than for any other medieval figure, St. Francis saw in the natural world a very real expression of God's ineffable love, and found in the countryside a setting which could reflect – rather than condition – his inward striving for virtue.

²²¹ *ibid.*, 47, 90.

7. Solitude and *otium*.

Although the *De otio religioso* and the *De vita solitaria* display many differences, they nevertheless appear to describe very similar concepts. Like *otium*, solitude seems to denote the moral programme which the *Secretum* was designed to inculcate. Despite being cast in a language which is at variance with that of the *De otio religioso*, and expressed in a manner which is in many ways less rigorous, the idea of the *solitudo animi* is based on the use of reason to apprehend God and the suppression of the worldly desires which engender confusion and obscure truth. A mental concept more than a description of a physical condition, like *otium*, it is opposed to the temptations of the world and the vicissitudes of fortune, and is predicated on the instability and falseness of the temporal. Just as *otium* describes not a literal form of leisure, but an inward *vacatio a mendacibus*, solitude indicates an isolation of the self from worldly desires, an inward, psychological and moral solitude at some distance from the literal meaning of the word. The two concepts, as Jennifer Petrie has observed, each relate to specific activities – meditation, prayer and study – which help the *otiosus* or the *solitarius* to expunge his attachment to the world and embrace virtue more fully.²²²

In common with the idea of *otium* explored in the previous chapter, Petrarch's *solitudo* is based on a moral philosophy which closely resembles the theology of St. Augustine. As with his exploration of *otium*, Petrarch appropriated classical imagery and exploited similarities between classical literature and Christian theology while propounding a deeply Christian understanding of the life of virtue. At some distance from both Stoic and Epicurean notions of a *vita contemplativa*, Petrarch's *solitudo* is – like *otium* – a cipher for the practical application of the moral programme described in the *Secretum* and reliant on a *meditatio mortis* and the application of reason in the context of grace.

²²² Petrie, 'Petrarch *solitarius*', 32-3.

The holy passion of friendship

1. Petrarch and friendship

Friendship was extremely important to Petrarch and he valued his friends very highly. From his youth, he was continually finding new friends and building relationships which were as pleasurable as they were enduring. He was not loath to reveal his strength of feeling on the subject. Writing to Giovanni d'Incisa, a Florentine relative, on 10th April 1348, he described friendship as being 'much rarer and more precious than gold'.¹ Similarly in a letter to the grammarian Zanobi da Strada² written some four years later, he explained his attempt to reconcile a quarrel between Niccolò Acciaiuoli and Giovanni Barrili³ by asking rhetorically whether there was anything among men which was greater than friendship except virtue itself.⁴ Indeed, a few months earlier, he had advised the same Niccolò that even a man as mighty and exalted as a king should hold nothing barring God and virtue as dear as friendship.⁵

Petrarch's friendships have been the subject of great scholarly interest and his attachment to his friends has frequently been observed. In the portrait with which he concluded his biography of Petrarch, for example, E. H. Wilkins asserted that:

Never did any man form and cultivate a richer store of friendships; never did any man draw deeper devotion from his friends, or maintain a deeper devotion to them. ... Nothing short of proven unworthiness could lead to a withdrawal of friendship – not the blows of a cruel fortune, not even the rare wounds given him in friendly faithfulness, not even the rare necessity faithfully to wound his friends. He rejoiced when actual companionship with friends was possible; but

An early version of this chapter was presented at the Society for Italian Studies Interim Conference at the Institute of Germanic and Romance Studies at the University of London (25th April 2008). I am grateful for the many helpful comments and suggestions received at that event.

¹ *Fam.* VII, 11, 4: 'Multo rarior multoque preciosior res est amicitia quam aurum...'

² On Petrarch's friendship with Zanobi da Strada, see, for example, P. Guidotti, 'Un amico del Petrarca e del Boccaccio: Zanobi da Strada, poeta laureato,' *Archivio storico italiano* 13, (1930), 249-93.

³ q.v. *Fam.* XII, 16.

⁴ *Fam.* XII, 17, 4.

⁵ *Fam.* XII, 2, 15.

through the powers of his memory and his imagination he felt them present even in absence, even if they had never met.⁶

Few have matched Wilkins' eloquence, but he is nevertheless reflective of historical opinion. Aldo Scaglione, to take another example, is both accurate and typical in having described Petrarch as 'an ideal friend, ever ready to help and to do so graciously,'⁷ while Bosco similarly encapsulates the impression conveyed by Petrarch's correspondence in concluding that he was a person for whom hatred was alien.⁸

If the importance of friendship in Petrarch's life has been well appreciated, however, Petrarch's conception of friendship has received only very little scholarly attention. Although there are many illuminating studies of his relationship with individual figures or groups,⁹ his understanding of the term '*amicitia*' seems to have aroused almost no interest within the field.¹⁰ Even major texts on the concept of friendship in the late Middle Ages and early Renaissance grant Petrarch no more than a fleeting reference. Reginald Hyatte, for example, refers to Petrarch on only two inconsequential occasions¹¹ and he merits no serious examination in E.D.H. Carmichael's recent important study.¹² Besides a brief paper published by Gabriel Maugain in 1928,¹³ the only significant attempt to engage with Petrarch's notion of *amicitia* amongst modern scholars is Claude Lafleur's 2001 study.¹⁴

It cannot be denied that the evidence reveals that Petrarch's friendships had a very practical and pragmatic dimension. There are many instances of Petrarch intervening on

⁶ Wilkins, *Life of Petrarch*, 252.

⁷ A. Scaglione, 'Petrarca 1974: A Sketch for a Portrait,' in A. Scaglione, ed., *Francis Petrarch, Six Centuries Later. A Symposium*, (Chapel Hill and Chicago, 1975), 1-24, here 19.

⁸ Bosco, *Petrarca*, 181.

⁹ The bibliography for Petrarch's friends and friendships is vast, but see, for example, ; U. Berlière, *Un ami de Pétrarque, Louis Sanctus de Beeringen* (Rome, 1905); H. Cochin, *Un amico del Petrarca: lettere del Nelli al Petrarca*, trans. Le Monnier (Florence, 1901); C. Felisari, 'Un amico del Petrarca: Paganino da Bizzozzero,' *Studi petrarcheschi*, n.s. 1 (1984): 205-51; P. G. Pisoni, 'Guglielmo Maramaldo commentatore di Dante e amico del Petrarca,' *Studi petrarcheschi*, n.s., 1 (1984): 253-58; Guidotti, 'Un amico del Petrarca e del Boccaccio: Zanobi da Strada'; L. Lazzanni, 'Amici del Petrarca a Venezia e Treviso,' *Archivio Veneto* 14 (1933): 3-16; A. Pertusi, *Leonzio Pilato tra Petrarca e Boccaccio* (Venice and Rome, 1964); M. Vattasso, *Del Petrarca e d'alcuni suoi amici* (Rome, 1904); E.H. Wilkins, 'Petrarch and Giacomo de' Rossi,' *Speculum* 25 (1950): 347-78; G. Zaccagnini, 'Guido Sette amico del Petrarca,' in *Parma a Francesco Petrarca* (Parma, 1934), 237-42.

¹⁰ Petrarch's library, indeed, appears to have attracted more attention than his reading of and reaction to specific texts. See, for example, J. Leclercq OSB, 'L'Amitié dans les lettres au Moyen Age: autour d'un manuscrit de la bibliothèque de Pétrarque,' *Revue du Moyen Age Latin* 1 (1945): 391-410. It is remarkable that Trinkaus devotes an entire chapter to discussing Petrarch's 'Critique of Self and Society', but almost completely neglects to consider the concept of friendship. Trinkaus, *The Poet as Philosopher*, 52-89.

¹¹ R. Hyatte, *The Arts of Friendship. The Idealization of Friendship in Medieval and Early Renaissance Literature* (Leiden, 1994), 1-2, 142.

¹² E. D. H. Carmichael, *Friendship. Interpreting Christian Love*, (London and New York, 2004).

¹³ G. Maugain, 'Pétrarque et l'art de l'amitié,' *Mélanges de littérature et d'histoire* (1928): 49-69.

¹⁴ C. Lafleur, *Pétrarque et l'amitié. Doctrine et pratique de l'amitié chez Pétrarque à partir de ses textes latins* (Paris and Quebec, 2001).

behalf of a friend, representing another's interests, or offering advice on particular problems. Using his own influence to good effect, he was, for example, only too willing to ask Emperor Charles IV to show favour to Lello di Pietro Stefano dei Tosetti, whom Petrarch tellingly called 'Laelius'.¹⁵ His relationship with Laelius is, indeed, indicative of his depth of attachment to his friends. Petrarch first met Laelius and Ludwig van Kempen ('Socrates') on a visit to Giacomo Colonna, Bishop of Lombez, in 1330.¹⁶ The three were fast friends and, although there appear to have been some squabbles over the years,¹⁷ their nicknames are a testament to the esteem in which Petrarch held their amity,¹⁸ and the bond between Laelius and Socrates is commemorated in the *Triumphus Cupidinis* as a tantalising example of *l'amore perfetto*.¹⁹ They were, indeed, so dear to him that Petrarch not merely dedicated the *Familiares* to Socrates,²⁰ but even considered establishing a quasi-monastic community at Montrieux in late 1347.²¹ There are, moreover, cases of Petrarch creating a textual community which allowed him to enjoy certain reciprocal benefits from his friends. This is perhaps most evident in his friendship with Giovanni Boccaccio, from whom he received an unexpected metrical epistle in 1350.²² Although Petrarch was apparently rather slovenly in replying, Boccaccio's bold statement of respect was the beginning of a rich and rewarding literary friendship which was marked by openness and liberality. Among the countless gifts which the two exchanged in later years, Boccaccio sent Petrarch Leontius Pilatus' Latin translation of Homer's *Iliad*,²³ and in turn, Petrarch – who was not easy to impress – showed his admiration for the younger man's talent in translating the story of Griselda from Boccaccio's *Decameron* into Latin.²⁴

¹⁵ *Fam.* XIX, 4; 'Laelius' was a reference to Gaius Laelius, regarded by Cicero and others as the epitome of the loyal friend for his relationship with Scipio Africanus during the Second Punic War. Hyatte, *The Arts of Friendship*, 31-4, 37, 171, 196, 210-11.

¹⁶ Wilkins, *Life of Petrarch*, 9.

¹⁷ q.v. *Fam.* XX, 13; XX, 14; XX, 15.

¹⁸ 'Socrates' carries with it a sense of wisdom, obviously, but also reflects the degree to which the Socratic dialogues provided an important source (direct and indirect) on friendship for medieval and Renaissance authors. Hyatte, *The Arts of Friendship*, 10-16; S. Bowd, 'Swarming with Hermits: Religious Friendship in Renaissance Italy, 1490-1540' in A. Brundin and M. Treharne, eds., *Forms of Faith in Sixteenth-Century Italy* (Ashgate, forthcoming).

¹⁹ *Triumphus Cupidinis*, IV, 67-78.

²⁰ *Fam.* I, 1, 11.

²¹ E. H. Wilkins, 'Petrarch's Ecclesiastical Career,' *Speculum* 28/4 (Oct. 1953): 754-775, here 762-3; Berlière, *Un ami de Pétrarque*, 14-15, 40-1. Petrarch petitioned the pope to allow Socrates to join this community, but there was no mention – and no need to mention – Laelius. How he fitted into this arrangement, if at all, is unclear. The proposed community never materialised, primarily because of Petrarch's decision to return to Italy in November 1347, for which see *Ecl.* VIII.

²² Wilkins, *Life of Petrarch*, 93.

²³ For the relationship between Petrarch, Boccaccio and Leontius Pilatus, see *Sen.* VI, 1. See also Pertusi, *Leonzio Pilato*.

²⁴ *Sen.* XVII, 3; Hyatte, *The Arts of Friendship*, 142. For Petrarch's translation of the tale of Griselda, see, for example, V. Branca, 'Per il testo del «Decameron». La prima diffusione del «Decameron»',

But just as Richard Trexler has demonstrated that the operative and reciprocal aspects of the later friendship between Lapo Mazzei and Francesco di Marco Datini rested on an underlying conception of an idealised friendship and a web of self-perceptions, so in Petrarch's friendships, the real interpenetrates with the ideal.²⁵ As Kenneth Gouwens has observed, Petrarch

took on the role of "moral therapist" for whom "[l]anguage itself could be used in such a way as to become affectively therapeutic. He sought knowledge of himself and the world in a dialogic context, in which conversations (whether real or imagined) facilitated his own personal growth ... [I]ntrospection and the interpersonal ... thus complement each other... Viewed in [this light], the symbiosis of humanist moral enquiry and the social world of the sodalities becomes manifest."²⁶

Friendship for Petrarch was not merely a fact of life, but an intrinsic part of his *lebensweisheit*, a component in the practical philosophy of living, and was intimately connected with his moral sentiments. His thoughts on the subject are not, it is true, collected in a single text. There is nothing comparable to the *De otio religioso* or the *De vita solitaria* to be found for friendship. His writings – especially the *Familiares* and the *Seniles* – are, however, littered with sentiments which point to an active and conscious engagement with a rich literary tradition, and peppered with remarks which indicate a deliberate effort to make friendship an integral part of a systematic body of practical moral philosophy. In the *Familiares*, for example, where classical and patristic texts provide a constant source of reference, Petrarch was preoccupied with the question of how to distinguish between true and false friends – itself bound up with the nature of true love²⁷ – and seldom tired of pointing out the connection between friendship and virtue.²⁸ The question of friendship, indeed, is the subject of seven chapters in the two books of the *De remediis utriusque fortune* and receives some of the most detailed and philosophically challenging analysis in the entire

Studi di filologia italiana 8 (1950): 54-61; idem, 'Sulla diffusione della «Griselda» petrarchesca', *Studi petrarcheschi* 6 (1956): 221-24; idem, *Boccaccio medievale* (Florence, 1986), 388-94; G. Albanese, 'La «Griselda», in M. Feo, ed., *Codici latini del Petrarca nelle biblioteche fiorentine. Mostra 19 Maggio – 30 Giugno 1991*, (Florence, 1991), 432-5; G. Albanese, 'Fortuna Umanistica della Griselda,' *Quaderni petrarcheschi* 9- 10 (1992-3): 571-628; M. Hernández Esteta, 'Lecturas del relato de Griselda: "Decameron" X, 10 y "Seniles", 10, 3,' *Rivista di letteratura italiana* 9 (1991): 373-99.

²⁵ R. C. Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence* (Ithaca and London, 1991), 131-58.

²⁶ K. Gouwens, 'Perceiving the Past: Renaissance Humanism after the "Cognitive Turn"', *American Historical Review* 103/1 (Feb. 1998): 55-82, here 76-7, quoting C. Trinkaus, 'Italian Humanism and Scholastic Theology,' in A. Rabil Jr., ed., *Renaissance Humanism: Foundations, Forms and Legacy*, 3 vols., (Philadelphia, 1988), 3: 327-48 at 330.

²⁷ For which see M. Feo, 'L'amore perfetto,' in R. Cardini and D. Coppini, eds., *Petrarca e Agostino*, (Arezzo, 2004), 109-130.

²⁸ e.g. *Fam.* XVIII, 8, 4: 'Virtus est amicitie fundamentum...'

text.²⁹ Similarly, we have already seen that the *De vita solitaria* makes frequent reference to friendship. Although Petrarch conceived of solitude as a *solitudo animi*, the practice of living as a *solitarius* was evidently very closely bound up with the active exercise of friendship. Petrarch's prefatory letter to Philippe de Cabassoles indicates that it was both pleasurable and helpful to have a friend for company. The cause and dedication of the book, together with the implication of its opening remarks reveals that – in a way which must be explored more closely – a friend could help kindle the divine fire of a man's soul and, by extension, also bask in its warmth.

In attempting to place the concept of friendship in a moral, as much as a practical context, Petrarch actively participated in a long intellectual tradition, and was familiar with a range of the most important texts on the subject, stretching from Aristotle,³⁰ Cicero and Seneca,³¹ to Ambrose,³² Augustine³³ and Bernard of Clairvaux.³⁴ Unwilling to see Petrarch's understanding of *amicitia* as having significant relevance for his broader moral philosophy, Lafleur has contended that his literary treatment of the theme is essentially aphoristic. Drawing from this rich literary heritage, Lafleur suggests that Petrarch avoided the temptations of rigor and systematisation and offered instead a series of axioms relating to particular aspects of friendship.³⁵ The fact that Petrarch cited Cicero and Seneca more than any other authorities, however, seems in Lafleur's eyes to demonstrate that these authors exercised a decisive influence on his conception of *amicitia*, even though he rejected the Stoics' dogmatic attachment to virtue.³⁶ Of the two, Cicero was of primary significance and the general tone of Petrarch's writings on friendship is, for Lafleur, essentially Ciceronian.³⁷

²⁹ *De remediis utriusque fortune*, I, 49-52; II, 27, 52-53.

³⁰ e.g. *De remediis utriusque fortune*, I, 50; referring to Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, VIII, 3, 1156a-b; 5-7, 1157b-1159a; *De remediis utriusque fortune*, II, 31; referring to Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, IX, 9, 1169b18. There are also numerous possible references to the *Nicomachean Ethics* and the *Eudemian Ethics* in *De remediis utriusque fortune*, II, pref.

³¹ For a list of references to Cicero and Seneca (as well as to other sources) in Petrarch's writings on friendship, see Lafleur, *Pétrarque et l'amitié*, 11-32, esp. 13-6, 23-4.

³² See, for example, Petrarch's indication of his knowledge of Ambrose's *De officiis ministrorum* at *De vita solitaria*, II, ix, 5; *Prose*, 552. For his understanding of other texts, including apocrypha, see, for example, *Prose*, 476 n.1, 490, n.4, 512, n.2.

³³ Note Petrarch's interesting citation of Augustine's friendship with Ambrose in relation to his own attitude towards his friends, *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, I, 13; quoting Augustine, *Conf.* V, xii, 23.

³⁴ In the *De remediis utriusque fortune*, Carraud has found thirty two direct references to eleven of St. Bernard's works, in addition to sixteen references to three pseudo-Bernardian texts. A close knowledge of St. Bernard's life and works is observable at *Contra eum qui maledixit Italie*, 46-9, 52, 54, 68-9, 75, 114. For a brief discussion of Petrarch's knowledge of and attitude towards St. Bernard, see A. M. Voci, *Petrarca e la vita religiosa: il mito umanista della vita eremitica* (Rome, 1983), 61-5.

³⁵ Lafleur, *Pétrarque et l'amitié*, 37.

³⁶ *ibid.*, 37, 41-7.

³⁷ *ibid.*, 49-50.

2. *Virtus est amicitie fundamentum*: the role of Ciceronianism

It must be granted that there is much to recommend Lafleur's identification of a primarily Ciceronian flavour in Petrarch's writings on friendship. At a merely bibliographical level, it is necessary to acknowledge that Cicero's *De amicitia* was a natural point of reference for Petrarch. Although other Latin authors, such as Seneca and Valerius Maximus, must necessarily also be acknowledged, Cicero's dialogue – in which Gaius Laelius discusses his friendship with the recently departed Scipio – was, as Hyatte observes, 'one of the most widely read classical works on *amicitia perfecta* along with Latin versions of the *Nicomachean Ethics* after the twelfth century,' and represents possibly the most thorough theoretical exploration of friendship known to Petrarch.³⁸ As the lists of his favourite books demonstrate, he knew the work possibly as early as 1333, and perhaps indicates his appreciation of the text by listing it fourth among Cicero's works on the first list (after the *De re publica*, the *Tusculan Disputations* and the *De officiis*) and third on the second list (again after the *Tusculan Disputations* and the *De re publica*, but before the *De officiis*).³⁹ Indeed, Petrarch openly expressed the esteem in which he held Cicero with particular reference to the dialogue in letters to King Robert of Sicily on 26th December 1338 and to Jacopo da Firenze on 1st April 1352.⁴⁰

The impression given by Petrarch's reading is borne out by the many direct citations of the *De amicitia* and numerous instances of conceptual similarity in Petrarch's writings. Much of the treatment of friendship, especially in the *Familiares* and the *Seniles* appears to bear the hallmarks of Cicero's understanding of *amicitia*. Drawing significantly on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*,⁴¹ Cicero had argued that friendship should be valued above all other human things not merely because it is suited to our nature, but also because it is a unique form of relationship that is capable of adjusting itself to all circumstances.⁴² While human beings are naturally drawn to society, the bond which unites only a few is strongest, since it involves both *caritas* and *benevolentia* in the highest degree. 'For friendship,' Cicero claims, 'is nothing other than an agreement in all things human and divine, with *benevolentia*

³⁸ Hyatte, *The Arts of Friendship*, 26.

³⁹ Ullman, *Studies in the Italian Renaissance*, 117-137.

⁴⁰ *Fam.* IV, 3, 7; XII, 8, 8.

⁴¹ Theophrastus and Panaetius of Rhodes have also been suggested as influences on the work, although both are subject to some doubt.

⁴² For much of this paragraph, I follow Carmichael, *Friendship*, 26-28 and Hyatte, *The Arts of Friendship*, 26-33. What follows is far from a complete account of Cicero's conception of friendship, but only those elements which are pertinent to the forthcoming examination of Petrarch have been included. Cicero, *De amicitia*, VI, 22; c.f. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, VIII, 1-3, 1155a-1156b.

and *caritas*.⁴³ This bond of friendship, in which *benevolentia* and *caritas* played such an important role, could not be based on any form of utility – since such an interest would risk taking priority over the friendship itself⁴⁴ – but only on the love of virtue.⁴⁵ Human beings are drawn to a person whose character is like their own, because in him we see a lamp of virtue⁴⁶ and because there is nothing more attractive than virtue, nothing which induces us to affection more.⁴⁷ For Seneca as much as for Cicero and Aristotle, love for a friend is its own reward,⁴⁸ and it is perfectly possible to love as a friend even someone that we have never met.⁴⁹

The repudiation of utility and the primacy of *caritas* led Cicero – following in Aristotle’s wake⁵⁰ – to suggest that loving a friend was akin to loving oneself. ‘We naturally love ourselves, simply because we are dear (*carus*) to ourselves, not because we expect to gain from that love (*caritas*). We shall never find a true friend unless we transfer the same attitude to friendship, for a true friend ‘is, as it were, another self.’⁵¹ Having stated that a person sees in a friend a likeness of himself and the lamp of virtue, he loves that friend in the same way as he loves himself and the virtue he possesses. Since one learns self-love by clinging to virtue and rejecting all vice, one learns to love friends by searching for the same attributes in another.⁵²

Differences of social class had no place in a friendship based on a mutual love of virtue. Granting that the friend is an *alter idem*, parity must always be observed. Cicero’s Laelius hold Scipio up as an example of this attitude and expresses the view that all people should imitate his capacity to lift up his social inferiors in friendship.⁵³ If in friendship no differences can be observed, and two people are united in love, then, if loyalty (*fides*) is to be nurtured, it logically follows that nothing can be held back. There is no room for secrecy or dissembling. In friendship, Cicero argues, the obligation to love and be loved infers that it is necessary both to show and to see an open heart.⁵⁴ This, indeed, was a view to which Seneca

⁴³ Cicero, *De amicitia*, VI, 20: ‘Est enim amicitia nihil aliud nisi omnium divinarum humanarumque rerum cum benevolentia et caritate consensio.’; c.f. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, IX, 4-6, 1166a-1167b.

⁴⁴ Cicero, *De finibus*, III, xxi, 70; *De officiis*, III, x, 43. c.f. Cicero, *De amicitia*, VIII, 28.

⁴⁵ Cicero, *De amicitia*, IX, 30-1.

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, VIII, 27.

⁴⁷ *ibid.*, VIII, 28.

⁴⁸ Seneca, *Ep.* ix, 10-11; c.f. Cicero, *De amicitia*, IX, 31; Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, VIII, 8, 1159a.

⁴⁹ Cicero, *De amicitia*, VIII, 28.

⁵⁰ q.v. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, IX, 8, 1168a-1169b.

⁵¹ Carmichael, *Friendship*, 31, quoting Cicero, *De amicitia*, XXI, 80.

⁵² Cicero, *De amicitia*, XXI, 79; XXII, 82; c.f. Seneca, *Ep.* vi, 7.

⁵³ Cicero, *De amicitia*, XIX, 69-XX, 71. c.f. Seneca, *Ep.* ix, 18; xlvii, 16.

⁵⁴ Cicero, *De amicitia*, XXVI, 97.

was also attached. Although it was wise always to choose a friend with care, and to be slow in embarking upon a friendship, *fides* – which was the basis for the endurance of a friendship – could only be ensured if trust and openness were exercised for the sake of the love of virtue.⁵⁵

True friends were admittedly rare,⁵⁶ but where two people were united by *amicitia*, the bond was immortal. At the very beginning of the *De amicitia*, Cicero's Laelius tells his companions that he is happy despite Scipio's death, because he had spent his life with a friend with whom he shared everything, and with whom he enjoyed such great pleasure in pursuits, in public actions and in opinions.⁵⁷ The friendship which he had treasured in life stayed with him still. Had it been based on need, it would certainly have dissolved, but because it was founded on virtue alone, Laelius' friendship with Scipio could not die.⁵⁸

As in Cicero's dialogue, virtue is the foundation of friendship in Petrarch's description of the relationship between Scipio and Laelius in the *Africa*. Just as Publius Cornelius recommends Laelius to his son because of the active virtue and lofty spirit that make him the peer of any senator, Laelius himself praises Scipio to Syphax in similar terms. Scipio, Laelius proclaims, has no regard for worldly riches, spurns earthly pleasures⁵⁹ and scorns the hollow praise of the vulgar mob, treasuring only 'true glory' and dear friends.⁶⁰ These qualities, rather than his 'ethereal aura', 'tranquil majesty', 'luxuriant locks' and towering stature, recommend him most as a friend.⁶¹ Writing to Niccolò da Lucca in 1351, he justified his letters by quoting 'that commonly known and splendid opinion of Cicero's: "There is nothing more lovable than virtue, and nothing that attracts us more."' ⁶² Similarly,

⁵⁵ Seneca, *Ep.* iii, 2-3.

⁵⁶ Aristotle went so far as to argue that it was impossible to be a true friend to many people at the same time, thus demonstrating that true friendships *had* to be rare by definition. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, VIII, 6, 1158a, c.f. VIII, 4, 1156b; IX, 10, 1170b-1171a.

⁵⁷ Cicero, *De amicitia*, IV, 15.

⁵⁸ Cicero, *De amicitia*, IX, 32.

⁵⁹ Although it is not explicitly related to friendship (in the *Africa*, at least), Petrarch has Scipio indicate his contempt for earthly pleasures in a later passage. Rebuking Massinissa for bigamously marrying Sophonisba, the wife of the captive Syphax (who had by this point broken his alliance with Rome to assist Hannibal, and been defeated), Scipio modestly affirms that no virtue makes him more proud than his ability to keep a tight hold on the reins of pleasure, before delivering a searing attack on the effects of the evil of carnal desires. *Africa*, V, 370ff. The gentleness of the rebuke is in itself worthy of note: c.f. *Sen.* II, 1, 73.

⁶⁰ *Africa*, IV, 86-9:
 'Rebus in ambiguus, rebus tranquilla secundis
 spernit opes, populi ventosos spernit honores,
 gloria vera placet, dulces conquirat amicos:
 he sibi divitiae sunt...'

⁶¹ *Africa*, IV, 46-59.

⁶² *Fam.* IX, 11, 2: 'Michi autem cogitanti quibus artibus familiaris epystola de nichilo texeretur, mirantique quid michi tecum rei esset ac scribendi causas et materiam requirenti, nichil in animum prius venit quam vulgata illa Ciceronis ac preclara sententia: "Virtute nichil amabilius nichilque quod

in a long letter to Francesco il Vecchio da Carrara written on November 28th 1373 (*Sen.* XIV, 1), he stated that he agreed with ‘pagan philosophers’ that there could be no friendship without wisdom and virtue.⁶³ Adding a more personal note, Petrarch claimed in a letter to the Neapolitan knight Guglielmo Maramaldo, that his friendship with the musician Floriano da Rimini was founded on virtue, although the same could not unfortunately be said of Floriano’s son referred to only as ‘Orpheus’.⁶⁴

In suggesting that virtue was the foundation of friendship, Petrarch followed Cicero in simultaneously expressing a suspicion for utility. Friendship had no reference to need, although it was possible for friends to help one another from love. Mirroring the *De amicitia* in the *Africa*, Petrarch’s Laelius and Scipio had no need of each other, finding in their friendship all the reward they needed, although – as the *De viris illustribus* illustrates – they aided each other greatly.⁶⁵ Extending this further, Petrarch contended that utility was even antithetical to friendship. In the *De remediis utriusque fortune*, Gaudium is rebuked by Ratio for displaying pride in an abundance of friends. ‘Doomed are those friendships,’ Ratio declares,

of which pleasure or utility is the foundation! for they tremble while they are standing and come to ruination when they fall: it is not so much possible, as very easy – rather almost necessary, indeed – for the most part of these to follow Fortune, or age and beauty, than which nothing is more uncertain.⁶⁶

Utility and virtue are placed in stark opposition, and the tension between the two is restated in an earlier discussion of the friendship of kings. The man who believes himself beloved of monarchs, Ratio argues, necessarily value his soul, virtue, renown, quiet, *otium* and security little. The friendship of kings cannot be called true friendship since it encourages a man to neglect all things, to take on a servile attitude, to foster lust and to harbour avarice.⁶⁷ For

magis alliciat,” tantumque eius esse vim ut eos sepe, quos nunquam vidimus, diligamus.’ quoting Cicero, *De amicitia*, VIII, 28; c.f. *Sen.* VI, 3, 4, referring to Cicero, *De amicitia*, VI, 20.

⁶³ *Sen.* XIV, 1, 30: ‘Neque vero ipsi gentium philosophi opinati sunt posse veram amicitiam sine vera sapientia ac virtute consistere...’

⁶⁴ *Sen.* XI, 5.

⁶⁵ *De viris illustribus*, XI, 7-8, referring to Cicero, *De amicitia*; Livy, *Ab urbe condita*, XXVII, xvii, 8; text from the edition by Martellotti in *Prose*, 218-266, here, 242; c.f. Cicero, *De amicitia*, IX, 31. For a discussion of this passage in the context of Scipio as a poetic hero, see Bernardo, *Petrarch, Scipio and the Africa*, 110.

⁶⁶ *De remediis utriusque fortune*, I, 50: ‘RATIO: Caduce amicitie, quarum delectatio vel utilitas fundamentum est! nam et stantibus illis tremunt et cedentibus ruunt: id non possibile tantum sed perfacile, immo vero prope necessarium, quod hec plerumque vel fortunam sequuntur vel etatem formeque gratiam, quibus nichil incertius.’

⁶⁷ *De remediis utriusque fortune*, I, 49.

Petrarch, as for Aristotle and Cicero, the only reward of a true friendship lay in freely loving and being loved.⁶⁸

Believing that true friendship could be based only on virtue, Petrarch seems to have followed Cicero in contending that it was perfectly possible to strike up a relationship with someone whom one has never met. Indeed, given the large number of letters which Petrarch received from people seeking to make his acquaintance, it appears that he emphasises this dimension of friendship even more than his classical antecedents. Writing to Francesco Orsini in response to just such a letter on 10th February 1368, for example, Petrarch indicated that a friendship based on virtue did not require friends to see each other. Lulled into a pleasant daze by Francesco's youthful *benevolentia*, Petrarch emphasises that each saw in the other the lamp of virtue, and despite modestly understating his own character, begs to be numbered amongst Francesco's friends.⁶⁹ In the chapter of the *De remediis utriusque fortune* dealing with just this issue, Ratio reminds Gaudium that Massinissa, although initially an enemy of Rome, became a friend of Scipio's on the basis merely of his renown.⁷⁰

Petrarch's apparently Ciceronian emphasis on the allure of virtue and horror for utility had the effect of making love of self like the love of another. In a letter to Francesco Nelli written in 1355, he explicitly approved of Cicero's view that a friend is an *alter idem*,⁷¹ and, giving further credence to this, wrote in a later letter that he felt that his Socrates had been born for him in another part of the world, so much did his countenance, mind and virtue make them of one mind.⁷² There was, indeed, 'nothing false, no dissembling, nothing duplicitous, but only what is pure, candid and open,' as he put it in a letter to Francesco il Vecchio da Carrara.⁷³ A true friend, who was an *alter idem* in the sense intended by Cicero, was for Petrarch,

a light of the soul, a leader in advice, a torch for study, a pacifier of discord, a partner in labours, a companion in travel, one who calms you when at home; neither assiduous merely at home but in the countryside, on campaign, on land and at sea; nor a companion merely in the space of [this] life, but beyond the grave a living and immortal solace ...⁷⁴

⁶⁸ *Sen.* X, 5.

⁶⁹ *Sen.* XI, 6.

⁷⁰ *De remediis utriusque fortune*, I, 51.

⁷¹ *Fam.* XVIII, 8, 2.

⁷² *Sen.* I, 3, 4.

⁷³ *Sen.* XIV, 1, 30: 'Cuius consummate quidem ac perfecte, etsi paucissima numerentur amicorum paria, in quibus preclarissimum nomen habent Africanus minor et Lelius, tamen est et hec ipsa communis bonorum hominum amicitia dulcis ac placida, in qua nulla habeat locum adulatio, nulla contumelia aut contemptus, nulla discordia, nulla discrepatio, nisi de amici commodis aut honore, sed pax et consolatio et convictus. Nichil denique in hac fictum, nichil duplex, nichil occultum, sed pura omnia atque simplicia et aperta.'

⁷⁴ *Fam.* IX, 9, 4: 'Et ad summam amicus est alter idem, status nostri basis, animi lux, consilii dux, studii fax, dissidentum pax, curarum negotiorum particeps, peregrinationum comes refrigeriumque

Indeed, if one was to build loyalty (*fides*) in a relationship,⁷⁵ it was necessary, Petrarch believed, to love and to be loved in equal measure, as Seneca had advised, and to open one's heart entirely to a friend.⁷⁶ No difference in social class could be acknowledged and, writing to Philippe de Cabasoles – then Cardinal Bishop of Sabina on 5th May 1372 – Petrarch remarked that the Emperor Augustus not merely allowed, but also wished that Horace should be called his friend, despite his humble origin.⁷⁷

Like Cicero, Petrarch accepted that true friendship was a rare commodity. In the *De remediis utriusque fortune*, Gaudium boasts that he seems to have innumerable friends. In reply, Ratio asks whence came such an opinion when true friendships are rare indeed.⁷⁸ This statement is repeated almost like a mantra both in other portions of the text and in Petrarch's other writings.⁷⁹ Despite the caution which is intrinsic to this view of the incidence of *amicitia*, however, we should not be tempted to think that he necessarily advocated anything approaching a 'bunker' mentality amongst friends. Although the importance of friendship compelled him to follow Seneca in arguing that the moral qualities of a man should be examined carefully before making him a friend, and inspired his utterly Ciceronian injunction to be slow in forming friendships,⁸⁰ Petrarch's view of *amicitia* was informed both by a positive view of humanity and by an apparently Stoical pragmatism.⁸¹ In an undated letter, he warned a litigious friend not to be so quick to dismiss people as unworthy of friendship and not to be so set on befriending only the entirely good. 'I say that, if you will make all good people your friends,' he wrote, 'they will be few indeed.' For, he continued, quoting Juvenal, 'The good are certainly rare; they are scarcely as numerous as the gates of Thebes or the mouths of the rich Nile.'⁸² All people, Petrarch went on to say, are troubled by the perturbations of worldliness: the best man, as Horace correctly pointed out, is he who is

domesticum, neque domi tantum sed ruri militieque assiduus et terris et pelago, neque solum spatio vite par sed post busta vivax atque immortale solatium ...'

⁷⁵ For Petrarch, as for Cicero, *fides* was intrinsic to *amicitia* and gave both strength and lustre to any friendship. It was, however, a subject about which he spoke relatively little. When it is mentioned, it takes its place alongside other qualities of friendship. q.v. *Fam.* I, 6, 6.

⁷⁶ *De remediis utriusque fortune*, I, 50.

⁷⁷ *Sen.* XVI, 4. Petrarch is – surprisingly – incorrect in claiming that Horace was a freedman: it was Horace's father who had been a freedman. Note also *Sen.* VI, 4, 1.

⁷⁸ *De remediis utriusque fortune*, I, 50.

⁷⁹ *De remediis utriusque fortune*, I, 49; I, 50; *Fam.* VII, 11, 4.

⁸⁰ *Fam.* XII, 2, 15-16, quoting Seneca, *Ep.* lii, 2; Cicero, *De amicitia*, XXI, 76.

⁸¹ *Sen.* XIV, 1, 30, referring to Cicero, *De amicitia*, V, 18.

⁸² *Fam.* III, 15, 1: 'Studeto bonis omnibus esse carissimus, neque verendum est ne nimios habeas amicos aut nimium tibi negotii obiciam. Ita dico, si omnes bonos amicos tibi feceris, pauci erunt.

Rari quippe boni; numero vix sunt totidem quot
Thebarum porte vel divitis ostia Nili.'

quoting Juvenal, *Sat.* XIII, 26-7.

moved least.⁸³ Instead of being excessively judgemental, therefore, it is necessary to look for the good in people. In forging friendships, Petrarch argues, we should bear in mind that it has been found from experience that no spirit, however tranquil or healthy, is not occasionally moved by perturbations and agitated by the disturbance of human things.⁸⁴ True friendship might be rare, in other words, but we will only find it by looking for the good in imperfect people.

Once it had been forged, Petrarch believed that a true friendship was immune to separation or death.⁸⁵ Since *amicitia vera* was founded on virtue alone, the presence or absence of a friend was immaterial to the endurance or strength of the friendship. Considering absent friends in the *De remediis utriusque fortune*, Ratio counters Dolor's sorrow by arguing that the delight of friendship is to be found in the contemplation of another's virtue, and since this may be kept in mind always, it is impossible for an *amicus* to be snatched away by absence or even death.⁸⁶ Indeed, Ratio notes with approval that Cicero, Epicurus and Seneca found that a lively correspondence with friends – in which the *amicus* is almost made present both in reading and writing – could further help to eliminate distance in a *vera amicitia* based on virtue.⁸⁷ Following Cicero's *De amicitia* closely in the section of the *De remediis utriusque fortune* dealing with the death of a friend, Ratio observes that

If – as you ought – you have loved the virtue in [your] friend, that certainly will never be lost, nor will it die. For this reason they say that true friendships are immortal, because they are never dissolved by discord between friends, and are not even dissolved by death. Just as virtue conquers discord and the vice of all, nothing conquers virtue.⁸⁸

Continuing in this vein, Ratio alludes to the opening passages of the *De amicitia*. 'You have heard,' the character says to Dolor,

in the writings of Tully, that Laelius reassures himself that just as Scipio lived for him [in life], neither the fame nor the virtue of his deceased friend are extinguished in his memory. What prevents your Scipio from living for you now? ... Death is able to take the body of your friend, but not the friendship nor

⁸³ *Fam.* III, 15, 3, quoting Horace, *Sat.* I, iii, 68-9.

⁸⁴ *Fam.* III, 15, 4.

⁸⁵ For a charming and eloquent statement of this, see, for example *Fam.* VI, 3, 64.

⁸⁶ *De remediis utriusque fortune*, II, 53.

⁸⁷ *ibid.*, quoting Cicero, *Ep. ad Quintum.*, I, i, 45; Seneca, *Ep.* xxv, 5; c.f. *De vita solitaria*, I, iv, 8; *Prose*, 348-50.

⁸⁸ *De remediis utriusque fortune*, II, 52: 'RATIO: Si ut debes, in amico virtutem amasti, illa certe non perditur, nec moritur. Ideo veras amicitias immortales dicunt, quod nullo unquam dissidio amicorum, nec ipsa demum morte solvuntur. Sic discordiam vitiumque omne vincit virtus, ipsa vero nulla re vincitur.' c.f. *De remediis utriusque fortune*, I, 50.

his mind: for they belong to the category of things that defer neither to death nor to fortune, but [only] to virtue ...⁸⁹

Indeed, as Petrarch observed in a letter of consolation to Philippe de Cabassoles in on 25th February 1338, mourning for a dead friend was to be avoided both as a product of false love and as an example of the opinions of the mob.⁹⁰ The death of a friend – or even a brother, in Philippe’s case – was perhaps to be greeted with joy.⁹¹ Even Cicero (a pagan, no less) had recognised the immortality of the soul and acknowledged that the virtuous would find a heavenly repose after death.⁹² As a result, as Cicero had observed, to mourn the death of a person was to show oneself to be a self-lover rather than a friend and even to give way to envy.⁹³

This clinical dissection of the subject is given a more human face in a letter to Giovanni Colonna, probably written in about 1336. In this letter, Petrarch gently rebukes the Dominican friar for having complained that he was saddened by the absence of friends, and was no longer able to enjoy their ‘wonderful’ company.⁹⁴ ‘Innumerable causes might separate friends,’ he wrote,

but none rends true friendship asunder. When this is present, a friend cannot be absent. For however great the distance between places separates us from the conversation of friends, by the same degree do we shatter the misfortune of absence with assiduous recollection.⁹⁵

The example of Laelius and Scipio once again proves instructive, and gives credence to Virgil’s observation that ‘looks and words cling fast within the breast’ and that though absent, a man could yet been seen and heard as the result of love.⁹⁶ In the *De amicitia*,

⁸⁹ *De remediis utriusque fortune*, II, 52: ‘RATIO: Audisti apud Tullium, se solantem Lelium, ut illi Scipio suus vivit, ut, in memoria eius, nec extincti amici fama, nec virtus extinguitur. Quid Scipionem tuum tibi nunc vivere prohibet? ... Amici corpus eripere mors potest, non amicitiam nec animum: sunt enim ex illorum genere, que nec morti nec fortune subiacent sed virtuti ...’

⁹⁰ *Fam.* II, 1, 6.

⁹¹ *Fam.* II, 1, 9.

⁹² *Fam.* II, 1, 20-21.

⁹³ *Fam.* II, 1, 28, quoting Cicero, *De amicitia*, IV, 14.

⁹⁴ *Fam.* II, 6, 2: ‘...cuius lamentationis summa est, te acerrime atque inconsolabiliter doluisse, quod huius exoptatissimi atque optimi ducis nostri meamque et amicorum faciem videre desieris.’

⁹⁵ *Fam.* II, 6, 3: ‘Innumerabiles cause segregant amicos, amicitiam veram nulle; qua presente, amicus absens esse non poterit. Quantum enim locorum intervallis ab amicorum conversatione disiungimur, tantum absentie detrimentum assidua commemoratione discutimus.’

⁹⁶ *Fam.* II, 6, 3-4: ‘... cuius si tanta vis est, ut morte superata, defunctos etiam amicos pro viventibus celebremus – quod post obitum iunioris Africani, sapientissimo et omnium Romanorum in amicitia gloriosissimo viro Lelio docente, didicimus –, quid tam magnum est, si, absentia similiter victa, longe positos amicorum vultus pro presentibus habeamus? Apud poetam scriptum est,

haerent infixi pectore vultus

Verbaque;

et iterum

absentem absens auditque videtque.’

Petrarch recalled, Cicero's Laelius had told his listeners that he had loved Scipio's virtue, which could never die.⁹⁷ Although it would be 'inhuman and bestial' to deny the pleasure which comes from seeing a friend in the flesh, the delight of friendship is not restricted to the physical. If friendship were so governed, and affected by death, prison, illness and separation, it would be very short-lived, whereas, Petrarch claimed, 'it ought to be not only as long as the longest life, but it also ... behoves friendship to survive beyond.'⁹⁸

3. *Amabit enim sapiens Deum ... amabit et proximum, amabit virtutem ... amicos*

Although Petrarch's debt to Cicero and – to a lesser extent – Seneca cannot be denied, it is nevertheless possible to question Lafleur's contention that he adhered uncritically to a Ciceronian notion of *amicitia*. While it is important to acknowledge Petrarch's frequent references to the *De amicitia*, it is necessary to recognise that while this text played a pivotal role in the development of late medieval and early Renaissance conceptions of friendship, it was not regarded as incompatible with Christian ideas of friendship in Christ, and from the fourth century onwards the classical language of friendship was appropriated for different

quoting Virgil, *Aen.* IV, 4-5; 83. These lines from the *Aeneid* speak of Dido's love for the recently departed Aeneas. Although the identity of the sentiment (woman-man) is inappropriate, the sense of parallelism inherent within the quotation is tantalising. On the one hand, it is tempting to postulate the pairings Dido-Laelius, Scipio-Aeneas which would certainly be plausible when one considers the degree to which both Scipio and Aeneas were used by Petrarch as paragons of virtue. On the other hand, however, such an identification of characters seems not merely tendentious, but also puzzling. The pairing of Dido and Laelius appears especially troublesome, since at first sight, this might suggest an implied association between carnal love and *amor virtutis*, which would certainly cause difficulties for Petrarch's notion of friendship. An interesting sidelight on this issue is provided in the *Africa* and in the Ambrosian Virgil. Whereas Virgil's Dido is essentially licentious, Petrarch observes in two of his glosses to *Aen.* IV in the Ambrosian manuscript that Seneca had amended IV, 3 ('*cupidineo amore*') to '*honestam admirationem viri egregii*'. Rather than having been consumed by foolish love in *Africa*, II, Petrarch's Dido is determined to preserve her chastity after the premature death of her husband and refuses the hand of numerous suitors. For the remainder of her days, she devoted herself to virtue and loved Aeneas in the most chaste fashion, for the sake of his moral qualities. Viewing the motivation of her love in this fashion, the pairing of Dido and Laelius does not seem so implausible or problematic. q.v. *Africa*, II, 418-27; c.f. *Triumphus pudicitie*, 154-59. For an interesting discussion of Petrarch's Dido, see Kallendorf, *In Praise of Aeneas*, 40-9.

⁹⁷ *Fam.* II, 6, 4, quoting Cicero, *De amicitia*, XXVII, 102.

⁹⁸ *Fam.* II, 6, 7-9: 'Nec ego quidem adversor dulcissimam esse presentiam amicorum; quis enim hoc negaverit, nisi inhumanus idem ac ferus? Sed nec tu michi negabis absentiam quoque suas habere voluptates, nisi totam fortassis amicitie pulchritudinem, que latissime patet, ad oculos solos restringimus et a sede eius, que est in animo, sevocamus; quodsi fieri ceperit, angustissima quidem area restabit, ubi se amicorum caritas oblectet. Ut enim mortem, ut carcerem, ut egritudines, ut necessitates, somnum famem sitim estus algores lassitudinem, quis studiorum aliarumque rerum occupationes innumeras explicet, quibus etiam in eadem domo, ne dicam urbe, degenitum nec vultus aspicere nec semper voces audire permittitur? Ita evi brevissimi reperietur amicitia, quam longissime vite non equeviam modo, sed, ut dixi, superstitem esse decuerat.' c.f. Augustine, *De vera religione*, xlvii, 88.

ends.⁹⁹ Despite the fact that Cicero's *De amicitia* exercised a strong influence on St. Ambrose's exposition of friendship in the *De officiis ministrorum*, an essentially classical vocabulary is imbued with new meaning, and a recognisably new conception of *amicitia* is fashioned from inherited materials.¹⁰⁰ St. Augustine also began his treatment of friendship with a discussion of Cicero's *De amicitia* and in his letter to Marcius offered a novel and Christian understanding of the concept while referring directly and with approval to Cicero's definition.¹⁰¹ In later centuries, this process of assimilation and adaptation continued and the words used to describe friendship – *amicitia*, *amor*, *caritas*, *benevolentia*, etc. – gradually acquired new meanings more attuned to structures of Christian theology. As Hyatte has observed,

[t]hroughout the medieval period, the Ciceronian-Senecan terminology of *amicitia vera* persisted in large part as the basic vocabulary of *amicitia Christiana* and also of secular sorts of friendship in Latin and vernacular works. The pagan terminology persisted, but its semantic content was radically altered.¹⁰²

In the works of St. Aelred of Rievaulx, for example, Cicero's *De amicitia* appears as an important source of inspiration, but could only be understood as a text prefiguring the precepts of the later Christian faith,¹⁰³ and in the works of later authors, references and allusions to Ciceronian and Senecan notions of friendship were employed more with an eye to stylistic considerations than out of a concern to reproduce the intellectual content of the original texts.¹⁰⁴

While it would certainly be incorrect to dismiss Petrarch's references to Cicero and Seneca as insincere concessions to stylistic considerations, it is not unreasonable to entertain the possibility that, as in medieval reinterpretations of the classical idea of *amicitia*, they could have been integrated into a Christian understanding of friendship, and to posit that what Lafleur has described as an aphoristic approach lacking in consistency and philosophical depth may in fact reflect a willingness to adapt Ciceronian and Senecan ideas

⁹⁹ Hyatte, *The Arts of Friendship*, 45-6; c.f. B. P. McGuire, *Friendship and Community: The Monastic Experience 350-1250* (Kalamazoo, 1988).

¹⁰⁰ Carmichael, *Friendship*, 45; L. F. Pizzolato, 'L'amicizia nel *De officiis* di Sant'Ambrogio e il *Laelius* di Cicerone,' *Archivio Ambrosiano* 27 (1974): 53-67; M. Dorothea, 'Cicero and Saint Ambrose on Friendship,' *The Classical Journal* 43/4 (Jan., 1948): 219-222.

¹⁰¹ Augustine, *Ep.* 256; Carmichael, *Friendship*, 58-9; J. McEvoy, 'Anima una et cor unum: friendship and spiritual unity in Augustine,' *Recherches de Théologie Ancienne et Médiévale* 53 (1986): 40-92; M. A. McNamara, *Friendship in Saint Augustine* (Fribourg, 1958).

¹⁰² Hyatte, *The Arts of Friendship*, 40.

¹⁰³ *ibid.*, 48.

¹⁰⁴ *ibid.*, 40.

to a different set of intellectual concerns, concerns which would more closely relate to his general conception of virtue.

At a general level, it is important to observe that Petrarch was not above adapting Cicero's idealised friendship in a manner to suit his underlying moral and aesthetic concerns.¹⁰⁵ In the *Africa*, for example, Petrarch freely attributed to both Scipio the Elder and Laelius characteristics which Cicero clearly associated with their homonymous descendents. This tendency is reflected in other, more telling ways and Petrarch's use of vocabulary in creating a rhetoric of friendship is striking. Although the words '*caritas*' and '*benevolentia*' – so important to Cicero's concept of friendship – do appear in his writings, their number is dwarfed by the incidence of '*amor*' and its cognates. Throughout his writings on the subject, friendship is described primarily in terms of the *amor* shared between two or more people, and questions regarding the implications of friendship are tackled from the same perspective. Although the portions of the *De remediis utriusque fortune* dealing with *amicitia* appear to display a marginally lower ratio of such words to '*caritas*'-terms¹⁰⁶ – perhaps due to the more pragmatic nature of the work – the evidence of the *Familiares* and the *Seniles* strongly suggests that Petrarch perceived there to be a strong linguistic and semantic connection between *amor* and *amicitia*. On the one hand, this is perhaps unsurprising. '*Amor*' is, after all, both the etymological and conceptual root of '*amicitia*', and Cicero himself drew attention to the association in the *De amicitia*.¹⁰⁷ On the other hand, however, Petrarch's preference for '*amor*' and its cognates seems to recall later traditions of friendship. Despite his etymological aside, Cicero deliberately avoided using '*amor*', and instead employed '*benevolentia*' and '*caritas*'. This was, indeed, a preference which was inherited by later generations. In the writings of St. Ambrose, for example, '*caritas*' and '*benevolentia*' continue to dominate the discussion of friendship, even though they are employed almost synonymously and are infused with the connotations of the equivalence of ἀγάπη and '*caritas*' in the vocabulary of late antique Christianity.¹⁰⁸ While Petrarch's choice of vocabulary does not signal a rejection of Cicero's influence, it nevertheless seems to suggest a willingness to engage with lexical norms common to a later, Christian treatment of friendship and to discuss Cicero's understanding of friendship in the language of patristic and medieval readers of the *De amicitia*.

¹⁰⁵ See, for example, Bernardo, *Petrarch, Scipio and the Africa*, 116-7, 121-6.

¹⁰⁶ In the seven relevant chapters of the *De remediis utriusque fortune*, '*amor*' and its derivatives appear on 26 occasions, and are used as nouns, verbs and adjectives in roughly equal proportion. '*Caritas*' and related words appear on 19 occasions, but it is noticeable that the word '*caritas*' itself only appears twice. For the most part, Petrarch uses the adjective '*carus*' which does not occupy the semantic space of the related noun. '*Benevolentia*' is not used at all in these chapters.

¹⁰⁷ Cicero, *De amicitia*, VIII, 26.

¹⁰⁸ Carmichael, *Friendship*, 45.

At a conceptual level, there is much to suggest that Petrarch consciously integrated Ciceronian and Senecan ideas into a distinctively Christian context. In the section of the *De remediis utriusque fortune* devoted to love affairs, Petrarch's characters scrutinise the word 'amor' in relation to a passage from Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations* and offer a telling insight into friendship. Although expressing himself with characteristic subtlety, Petrarch's treatment of *amor* skilfully navigates the linguistic space shared by different traditions and unveils a conception of *amicitia* which, though owing an appreciable debt to Cicero, ultimately stems from a Christian reinterpretation of the semantic content of *amor*.

The relevant passage of this chapter of the *De remediis utriusque fortune* begins when Gaudium asserts that he loves only what he is able to see.¹⁰⁹ Echoing sentiments expressed in *Fam.* IX, 11 and *Sen.* XVI, 4,¹¹⁰ and referring to II *Cor.* 4:18, Ratio argues that to love the temporal is to love the ephemeral and the base. If Gaudium wishes to love in this fashion, Ratio claims, he will love nothing great. More importantly, he will set himself against St. Paul's view that one should want to love 'not those things which are seen, but those which are not seen; for those things which are seen are temporal, while those which are not seen are eternal.'¹¹¹ With a blind spirit and with a devotion to the bodily senses, he will neither love anything eternal nor comprehend anything correctly. Despite Gaudium's accusation that he is dragging youthful games into calumny and is unfairly refusing to grant any indulgence,¹¹² Ratio develops his position by pointing out that youth is no defence against sin.¹¹³ The sin which results from such love brings only misery. If it is miserable to sin, it is more miserable to delight in the crime, and it is most miserable to excuse and to love such sinfulness. This misery will only be used up when Gaudium arrives at a more honest estimation of his enthusiasm for pleasure.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁹ *De remediis utriusque fortune*, I, 69.

¹¹⁰ *Fam.* IX, 11, 3-4; *Sen.* XVI, 4, *passim*. A similar line of argument occurs in the *De amicitia*, but it would be mistaken to see this as the sole source of inspiration. Although he mentions the fallacy of loving only those things which are visible, and asserts the superiority of those things which cannot be seen with the eyes, he does not do so in the same manner and certainly does not mention either the soul or God. c.f. Cicero, *De amicitia*, VIII, 27-8. Note also the absence of 'caritas' from Petrarch's descriptions.

¹¹¹ *De remediis utriusque fortune*, I, 69: 'RATIO: Si nichil amas, nisi quod cerni potest, nichil igitur magnum amas. Quid quod directe obvias precepto illi vulgatissimo: nolite amare "que videntur, sed que non videntur: que enim videntur temporalia sunt, que autem non videntur eterna." Vos autem, ceci animo deditique oculis, eternum nichil non dicam amare, sed nec intelligere nec cogitare quidem ydonei, vobiscum peritura sectamini et pudendos affectus honesto tegentes velo libidinem dicitis amorem: illum colitis, illum – fandi licentia – Deum facitis, ut probra verstra, que vix celum tegit, excuset.' quoting II *Cor.* 4:18.

¹¹² *De remediis utriusque fortune*, I, 69.

¹¹³ *ibid.*

¹¹⁴ *ibid.*

Although it is expressed in a somewhat different fashion, it is not difficult to see that in its major respects – the tension between the temporal and the spiritual, the association of worldliness with sin and misery, the role of self-knowledge – this shares much in common with the moral dilemma which the *Secretum* addresses and the threats to virtue examined in the *De otio religioso*, and discussed in chapters one and two respectively. Indeed, Gaudium's condition seems to parallel that of Franciscus, and Ratio's dissection of the problem complements that of Augustinus. Gaudium's determination to love only what is perceptible to the senses leads inevitably to vice and to misery, just as Franciscus' persistence in staring 'at the ground with eyes veiled with darkness'¹¹⁵ leads him to incur the weight of sin and the burden of *accidia*. The alleviation of their woes begins in each case with sincere self-analysis. Whereas Franciscus' condition is initially explored through a discussion of *voluntas* and *ratio*, however, it is examined in the *De remediis utriusque fortune* through a discourse on love. This is entirely consistent with Petrarch's absorption of St. Augustine's moral theology. The opposition of the love of God and the love of self or the world is a commonplace of St. Augustine's writings and, indeed, in the opening chapters of the *De vera religione*, it is possible to find a similar line of argument to that in the *De remediis utriusque fortune* expressed in terms of love with specific reference to II Cor. 4:18.¹¹⁶

The preliminary discussion of love – so reminiscent of St. Augustine – provides the introduction to Petrarch's commentary on the idea of friendship in the *Tusculan Disputations*.¹¹⁷ Love may be found, Petrarch argues, not merely amongst the common herd but also in learned writings in both Latin and Greek. Although Sappho is excused, Greek poets are sweepingly condemned as dealers in lascivious verse, and Anacreon and Alcaeus are singled out in imitation of Cicero.¹¹⁸ The Latin poets are just the same and – paralleling Cicero's reference to Ibycus of Rhegium – Gaudium is directed to consider Catullus, Tibullus, Propertius and Ovid, whose poems contain almost nothing except a vulgar, base form of love.¹¹⁹ The philosophers were apparently no better and even Plato is attacked for displaying a shocking licentiousness.¹²⁰ That is not to say that such men were wrong in their

¹¹⁵ *Secretum*, proem.: 'Satis superque satis hactenus terram caligantibus oculis aspexisti; quos si usqueadeo mortalia ista permulcent, quid futurum speras si eos ad eterna sustuleris?' *Prose*, 22.

¹¹⁶ Augustine, *De vera religione*, iii, 4.

¹¹⁷ See the appendix for a detailed comparison of the two passages.

¹¹⁸ *De remediis utriusque fortune*, I, 69. On Alcaeus and Anacreon, c.f. Cicero, *Tusc.* IV, xxxiii, 71. It is also possible that Petrarch could have derived some of his knowledge from corollary references in Ovid: on Alcaeus in relation to Sappho, c.f. Ovid, *Heroides*, XV, 29-30; on Sappho, c.f. Ovid, *Heroides*, XV, 3; 155; 183; 217.

¹¹⁹ *De remediis utriusque fortune*, I, 69. c.f. *Fam.* IX, 4, 14.

¹²⁰ *De remediis utriusque fortune*, I, 69: 'RATIO: ... Apud illos [philosophos], autem, non comunes quosque, sed severissimos philosophorum stoicos, ipsumque – quod misaberis – Platonem, in hoc errore versatos scimus.' c.f. Cicero, *Tusc.* IV, xxxiv, 72. It is perhaps curious that Petrarch should

opinions about love, but their persistent conflation of *amor* and *licentia* led them into dangerous waters. In that they believed that the wise man should love, the Stoics were quite correct, but only insofar as one is agreed about the nature of love. For Ratio, there is no room for doubt in this matter. The only proper object of love is not lust, but God himself and those things which He wills us to love:

The wise man will love God, as I have said, and he will love his neighbour; he will love virtue, wisdom, country, parents, children, brothers and friends, and if he is truly wise, he will also love his enemies, not for their own sake – I admit – but for the sake of Him who wills it.¹²¹

There is in these things no place for following the belief – which Petrarch misleadingly yokes to Cicero – that ‘love is the endeavour to form a friendship inspired by the semblance of beauty.’¹²² Age, beauty and their seductions are without doubt inappropriate to friendship, and are more properly called ‘*libido*’, a fact which may readily be observed if one looks with open and healthy eyes.

Conceived as a commentary on the *Tusculan Disputations*, this passage from the *De remediis* exhibits many points of commonality between Petrarch’s friendship and Cicero’s *amicitia*. Like Cicero, Petrarch distances himself from the view that friendship should be a function of any corporeal considerations and affirms that *amicitia* must be viewed as the corollary of a love of virtue. This, however, is far from being the complete picture. In prefacing his discussion of *amor* with an exegesis of II Cor. 4:18, and in introducing a reference to the primacy of God’s love in friendship, Petrarch appears to be reading Cicero through the lens of later Christian thought, exploiting the possibility of integrating an amended version of *Tusc.* IV, xxxiii, 70 – xxxiv, 72 with a Christian theology of *amicitia*.

Having followed St. Paul in asserting that we ought to love only that which cannot be seen with the eyes, and having equated the sensible with misery in the *De vera religione*, St. Augustine argued that those who are ‘ablaze’ with love for the eternal shall necessarily hate relationships founded purely on the temporal.¹²³ The reason for this is simple. The man who loves only that which he cannot lose will not merely be unconquerable, but will also be

even implicitly have grouped Plato with ‘*severissimos philosophorum stoicos*’, but this might best be thought of as an infelicity arising from his close use of the *Tusculan Disputations* and from Cicero’s potentially misleading ‘*Philosophi sumus...et...quidem nostro Platone*’.

¹²¹ *De remediis utriusque fortune*, I, 69: ‘RATIO: ... Amabit enim sapiens Deum, ut dixi, amabit et proximum, amabit virtutem, sapientiam, patriam, parentes, filios, fratres, et amicos et, si verus sapiens fuerit, inimicos etiam amabit, non propter illos – fateor – sed propter Eum qui hoc iubet.’

¹²² *De remediis utriusque fortune*, I, 69: ‘RATIO: ... In his omnibus, oro te, quis locus est pulchritudini? Sic enim in Ciceronis *Tusculano* diffinitum legimus: “Amorem ipsum conatum esse amicitie faciente ex pulchritudinis specie.”’ quoting Cicero, *Tusc.* IV, xxxiv, 72. It is important to note that the phrase quoted in this extract is a fragment.

¹²³ Augustine, *De vera religione*, xlv, 89.

tormented by none of the envy which would bring him misery. The man who loves God with his whole being will, by extension, also wish to follow Christ's injunction to love his brother as himself. For Augustine, the term '*frater*' was in this context synonymous with '*amicus*', '*socius*' and – in distinct contrast to Cicero¹²⁴ – '*proximus*'. For, Augustine argued, allowing for a reconfiguration of the idea of the *alter idem*,

He cannot lose his neighbour whom he loves as himself for he does not love even in himself the things that appear to the eyes or to any other bodily senses. So he has inward fellowship with him whom he loves as himself.¹²⁵

Augustine was not alone in pursuing this line of argument and, in different ways, it is common to much Christian thought on the subject of friendship. In the twelfth century, St. Aelred of Rievaulx was similarly willing to use a discussion of the different forms of love as an opportunity of shedding light on a form of friendship which retained links to Cicero's *amicitia* while resting on the foundations of Christian theology. Arguing that *amicitia* should be founded not on the object of worldly desires, but on the congruence of its nature with Christian love, and on the love of God, Aelred believed that friendship

should be desired, not for consideration of any worldly advantage or for any extrinsic cause, but from the dignity of its own nature and the feelings of the human heart, so that its fruiting and reward is nothing other than itself. Whence the Lord in the Gospel says: 'I have appointed you that you should go, and should bring forth fruit,' that is, that you should love one another.¹²⁶

Where it is viewed as an extension of the exegesis of II *Cor.* 4:18, the understanding of *amor* which emerges from Petrarch's gloss on the *Tusculan Disputations* appears to reflect Christian reinterpretations of classical notions of friendship. Like Augustine, St. Paul and Aelred of Rievaulx, Ratio rejects the view that man should love those things which are perceptible to the senses and, in a manner which recalls the early Augustinianism of the *Secretum*, endorses the love of the eternal which may be arrived at through self-knowledge. In the face of Gaudium's objections, however, Ratio is obliged to demonstrate more clearly the fallacy of loving the temporal. Cicero's treatment of lust at *Tusc.* IV, xxxiii, 70-xxxiv, 72 provided a convenient framework for this discussion. Adapting Cicero's words to a Christian purpose, Ratio illustrates that the 'love' found in the works of classical poets and philosophers is a worldly love, and asserts that God is the only proper object of *amor*. A man who loves God also loves virtue, his neighbour, his family, his friends and even enemies out

¹²⁴ Cicero had argued that friendship excels *propinquitās*. q.v. Cicero, *De amicitia*, V, 19.

¹²⁵ Augustine, *De vera religione*, xlv, 86.

¹²⁶ Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship*, trans. M. E. Laker, (Kalamazoo, 1977), I, 45-46, quoted in Hyatte, *The Arts of Friendship*, 63.

of obedience.¹²⁷ As in Augustine's *De vera religione* and Aelred's *De spirituali amicitia*, Petrarch contends that friendship – that *spiritual* friendship which involves loving another as a result of a love of God – cannot involve a love of the temporal and is intimately bound up with self-knowledge. The love of God and the love of Christ which spring from a true understanding of self are the true foundation of all friendship. In a letter written to Francesco Nelli on 13th January 1352, the point of reference in friendship is always God, 'who made us, who made friends, who made even the name of friendship itself', and this stands in contrast to the subjectivism which underpins a Ciceronian concept of *amicitia*.¹²⁸ Elaborating on the same theme in a letter written to Francesco il Vecchio da Carrara, Petrarch agrees with Pythagoras' opinion – reported in the *De officiis* – that a man should act towards friends so that it seems 'several persons are gathered in one',¹²⁹ and follows 'pagan philosophers' in affirming that there can be no friendship without wisdom and virtue.¹³⁰ This, however, is located firmly within the context of Christian thought and Petrarch uses a quotation from the Acts of the Apostles which occurs frequently in late medieval discussions of friendship to develop his point.¹³¹ 'Likewise,' Petrarch wrote, pointing to what he perceived to be the compatibility between his text and Pythagoras' view,

the conditions of true friendship are expressed in Holy Scripture, where ... it is written 'The company of those who believed and who loved one another in Christ was of one head and one soul, and no-one of them whatever he possessed, claimed it for his own use, and all their property was held in common.' [Acts 4:32] If someone were to define friendship as being faithful lovers in Christ, I certainly would not contradict him, because I do not believe there can be friendship, or any firm and stable relationship for that matter, except that Christ be the foundation.¹³²

¹²⁷ c.f. Trinkaus' rather surprising contradiction of this point. Trinkaus, *The Poet as Philosopher*, 75.

¹²⁸ *Fam.* XII, 4, 2: 'Si enim amicum vel audire vel cernere usqueadeo delectat, quid futurum rear ubi illum videbimus qui et nos et amicos et ipsum amicitie nomen fecit? si se ipsum quisque sique alios tam obnixe amat, si pretereuntibus tam iocunde utitur, qualiter is amandus fruendumque illo erit qui cuique nostrum et quod amet et quo amet, quo fruatur se, qua fruatur animam dedit? sed ineffabilis atque immensa res est et solo difficilis cogitatu.'

¹²⁹ *Sen.* XIV, 1, 30: 'Hec fere omnium summa est: nil humanis in rebus amicitia dulcius, nil sanctius post virtutem, eosque qui maxime potentia ac virtute prepolleant, maxime etiam amicis indigere, cum quibus et prospera et adversa participant: ab amico turpe nichil expetendum, pro amico nichil turpe faciendum, honestum amico nichil denegandum: his pro fundamento positus, debere amicorum omnia esse communia, unum animum, unam voluntatem, nec spe ulla nec metu nec periculo distrahendam: amandum amicum ut se alterum et omnem conditionis imparitatem exequendam: denique omnibus modis id agendum quod Pythagoras iubet; ut unus fiat ex pluribus.' referring to Cicero, *De officiis*, I, xvii, 56.

¹³⁰ *Sen.* XIV, 1, 30; see note 63, above.

¹³¹ Hyatte, *The Arts of Friendship*, 59; also *idem*, 45, 59-60, 64; c.f. McGuire, *Friendship and Community*. Note that Aelred attached particular importance to this passage as the ideal of the monastic community. q.v. Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship*, II, 21.

¹³² *Sen.* XIV, 1, 30: 'Que ipsa numquid non satis literis sacris expressa sunt, ubi inter *Actus apostolicos* scriptum est: "Multitudinis credentium et in Christo sese amantium erat cor unum et anima una, nec quisquam eorum, que possidebat, aliquid suum esse dicebat, sed erant illis omnia

Petrarch's subsequent protestation that he nevertheless agrees with 'pagan philosophers' is reduced merely to the status of a literary pretension: the quotation from *Acts* indicates that he cannot have seen virtue and wisdom as anything other than as functions of a love of Christ. Although pagan philosophers had no access to the truth of Christ, the flexibility of their terminology, and the imprecision of the statement attributed to Pythagoras allowed Petrarch to present them as complementing a Christian conception of friendship.

Although Petrarch's understanding of the relationship between *amor* and *amicitia* places him in close relation to Augustine and Aelred of Rievaulx, and sets him at a distance from classical notions of friendship, that is not to say that he used the works of Cicero and Seneca insincerely, or rejected their contributions to the concept entirely. Rather, he seems to have seen classical and Christian ideas of *amicitia* as essentially complementary, and – adopting a rather teleological approach – appears to have viewed Cicero and Seneca as having to some degree anticipated the role of friendship in Christian moral theology. Exploiting the degree to which classical texts served as the point of departure for later thought, Petrarch was able to mine Cicero's treatises and Seneca's letters for gnomic quotations and allusions, confident that in a Christian conceptual context, they would prove complementary and consistent. Ciceronian and Senecan propositions, which had already been adapted by theologians in late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, could readily be assimilated into Petrarch's notion of *amicitia* without compromising his Christian reinterpretation of *amor* or his underlying attachment to a notion of virtue derived from the early works of St. Augustine.

A sense of this teleological method of reading can be gauged from the fact that a notion which appears to be unmistakably Ciceronian or Senecan in one letter is frequently couched in terms of Christian *amor* and early-Augustinian notions of virtue in another letter from a proximate period. An excellent example of this is provided by Petrarch's responses to the death of friends. Although, as we have seen, Petrarch's assertion that friendship cannot be dissolved by death appears to reproduce the sentiments of the *De amicitia*, the similarities seem to be primarily linguistic and reflect Petrarch's willingness to read terms such as *virtus*, *amicitia* and *immortals* as if they were imbued with a Christian meaning, irrespective of their original context. While Petrarch believed friendship to be immortal because it is a bond founded on virtue, the nature of that bond, and the meaning of both virtue and immortality

communia"? Et, si quis dicet amicitiam illam fuisse credentium et in Cristo sese amantium, nec ego de alia loquor, nec amicitiam stabilem nec omnino aliquid firmum reor cui non Cristus fuerit fundamentum.' quoting *Acts*. 4:32; trans. B. G. Kohl, in Kohl and Witt, eds, *The Earthy Republic*, 67.

reflect his reorientation of the term *amor* in the *De remediis*. In a letter written to Socrates on 23rd June 1359, Petrarch wrote

I know that you greatly desire to hold on to me, even though our minds are joined by virtue, as Jerome put it. There is nothing which may separate those who are joined by the glue of Christ; not place, not time, not forgetfulness, not boredom, not hope, not fear, not envy, not anger, not hatred, not fortune, not prison not chains, not wealth, not poverty, not sickness, not death, not the tomb and the reduction of the body to ashes. For this reason true friendships are immortal ...¹³³

The language here is congruent with that used both in letters examined earlier in this chapter (e.g. *Fam.* II, 6, 7-9), and also in Cicero's works. Petrarch's point of reference, however, is neither Cicero nor Seneca, but Jerome, and the role played by virtue in uniting friends is described entirely by '*Cristi glutino*'. True friendships are indeed immortal because they are founded on virtue, but that virtue is described by the love of Christ.

In the same fashion, Petrarch's Christian-Augustinian reinterpretation of *amor* can be seen lurking behind the apparently flagrant Ciceronianism of *Fam.* II, 1. Although Petrarch seems to have Cicero, *De amicitia*, IV, 14 in mind when he upbraids Philippe de Cabassoles for mourning for his recently deceased brother, and even quotes briefly from the text,¹³⁴ an identical use of the same passage in a letter written in late 1352 or early 1353 indicates that this passage was chosen purely for the sake of an appropriate quotation. Attempting to console the Paduan clergy on the death of Bishop Hildebrand, Petrarch carefully avoided offering advice to such men,

but it should nevertheless not be allowed that you should weep for the death of such a man, lest – following the opinion of Cicero – it should be seen to be more because of envy than because of friendship that [you] bewail [this] happy man. For who except an envious man mourns the passing of a friend from the flesh to the spirit, from earth to heaven, from labour to peace, from death to life, from temporal afflictions to blessed eternity?¹³⁵

As in *Fam.* II, 1, Petrarch's use of Cicero, *De amicitia*, IV, 14 is appropriate and seems consistent with the sense of the original. On closer examination, however, Petrarch's

¹³³ *Fam.* XXI, 9, 22: 'Scio te magno mei desiderio teneri; etsi enim animos virtute coniunctos utque ait Ieronimus. Cristi glutino copulatos nichil sit quod separet, non locus non tempus non oblivio non tedium non spes non metus non invidia non ira non odium non fortuna non carcer non vincula non divitiae non paupertas non egritudo non mors non sepulcrum et resolutum corpus in cineres, ideoque vere amicitiae immortales sint...' quoting Jerome, *Ep.* 53, 1.

¹³⁴ *Fam.* II, 1, 28; see note 93, above.

¹³⁵ *Fam.* XV, 14, 36: 'Non audeo quidem hortari, imo vero nec permittere ut talis viri exitum ploretis ne iuxta sententiam Ciceronis, invidie potiusquam amicitiae videatur complorare felicem. Quis enim nisi invidus amicum lugeat de carne ad spiritum, de terris ad celum, de laboris ad quietem, de morte ad vitam, de temporalibus erumnis ad eternam beatitudinem transisse?' referring to Cicero, *De amicitia*, IV, 14.

consolation is markedly different from Cicero's understanding of why a man should not grieve for the death of a friend. In the *De amicitia*, Cicero's Laelius defends the view that it was a mark of envy to mourn a friend's death by referring to the Stoic belief that death entails no pain and should be greeted calmly. Since no sensation remains, Laelius claims, there will be no good in death, but nor will there be any evil. For this reason alone, an *amicus* (who wishes only the good for another) should rejoice, rather than grieve, at the death of a friend.¹³⁶ The good which Petrarch's *amicus* wills for his friend, however, is very different from the sense in which Cicero intended in *De amicitia*, IV, 14. In Petrarch's view, the Paduan clergy should rejoice at Bishop Hildebrand's death not because – *sensu amisso* – he shall be free from both good and evil, but because he shall be delivered from the wretchedness of worldly existence into the blessed peace of heaven. The pairing of opposites reveals familiar preoccupations. It is the early Augustinianism of the *Secretum* and the tension exposed by Petrarch's exegesis of II Cor. 4:18, rather than the Stoicism of the *De amicitia* and the *Tusculan Disputations* that is manifested in '*carne/spiritum*', '*terris/celum*', '*temporalibus erumnis/eternam beatudinem*'. While Cicero's text rendered a gnominically appropriate quotation, the friendship of the clergy of Padua for their departed Bishop should, for Petrarch, be bound up with an idea of virtue founded on the opposition of the worldly and the heavenly, and a conception of *amor* similarly based on the tension between the temporal and the eternal.¹³⁷

If Petrarch was willing to translate Ciceronian and Senecan notions of *amicitia* into a distinctively Christian setting, however, that is not to say that the structure of his thought on this subject was confined by the limits of classical thought. Petrarch's teleological reading of works such as the *De amicitia* and the *Epistolae morales* was based on a certain sense of intellectual detachment: although he certainly perceived there to be a thread of continuity connecting ancient philosophy with modes of thought current in the fourteenth century, he nevertheless used classical texts only insofar as they suited his purpose, rather than deriving his purpose from the writings of his classical antecedents. While a significant portion of

¹³⁶ Cicero, *De amicitia*, IV, 14; c.f. Cicero, *Tusc.* I, xlix, 117-119.

¹³⁷ There is a sense in which this is reflected in Petrarch's adaptation of Ciceronian terminology in both the *De remediis utriusque fortune* and the *Familiares*. At *De remediis utriusque fortune*, I, 69, Petrarch amends Cicero, *Tusc.* IV, xxxiv, 72 to give '*... si sit amor quisquam in rerum natura since solitudine turpique desiderio sine suspiro et ardenti cura ...*' where the interpolation of '*turpique*' and '*ardenti*' appear to indicate that '*amor*' was to be understood in a fashion more closely related to the early-Augustinianism of the *Secretum* than to Cicero's original sense. See Appendix. A similar adaptation of terminology is visible at *Fam.* XXI, 15, 26. This passage, it is true, has nothing which conflicts with Cicero's conception of friendship, but it is nevertheless striking that Petrarch uses the words '*sanctius*', '*celestius*' and '*deiformius*' (a distinctively medieval term unknown to classical Latin and not found in English or Irish sources before c.870; *Revised Medieval Latin Word List*, prepared by R. E. Latham, (London, 1965), 136) to describe *amicitia*, all of which are redolent of a Christian adaptation of classical thought.

Petrarch's conception of friendship inhabits the linguistic (if not the semantic) space shared by classical and Christian traditions, there are some respects in which it displays traits which have no place within the thought of Cicero or Seneca and appear to have been inspired by later Christian theology.

An excellent example is provided by Petrarch's examination of the bond of friendship with regard to the individual's more general relationship with humanity. As we have seen, for both Cicero and Seneca, friendship was an exclusive relationship. Although all of human society was united by a certain bond, Cicero had argued that this bond was strongest between individuals who were close to one another. 'How great the power of friendship is,' he contended,

may most clearly be recognised from the fact that, in comparison with the infinite ties uniting the human race and fashioned by Nature herself, this thing called friendship has been so narrowed (*et adducta in angustam*), that the bonds of affection always unite two persons only, or, at most, a few.¹³⁸

Friendship was, in other words, made valuable by the fact that it could only be shared by a small number of people. While Petrarch admitted that friendship was rare, however, he was not convinced of this exclusivity and, as we have seen, was not prepared to regard the majority of people as strangers to virtue. In a letter written some time after 1338, Petrarch offered Giovanni Colonna consolation on the difficulties of life. Confessing that the letter he had received from Giovanni had moved him to tears, Petrarch suggested that the tears which we shed for the sufferings of others are more honest than those which we shed for our own.¹³⁹ 'Juvenal says that this can be said not merely about such friendships [as ours],' he continued,

but about all human society, where no evil is irrelevant to a good man, and teaches that tears were given to the human kind as proof of our respect. Terence had said this a long time before:

'I am a man and I consider nothing human alien to me.'

Indeed, I do not deny that this is true. In this obligation of loving, however, there are without doubt degrees, by which we are reduced from the widest (so to speak) open space of human kindness into the narrow one of kinships and friendships, and the universal love of all people is narrowed down to love of and benevolence towards the few.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ Cicero, *De amicitia*, V, 20: 'Quanta autem vis amicitiae sit ex hoc intellegi maxime potest, quod ex infinita societate generis humani, quam conciliavit ipsa natura, ita contracta res est et adducta in angustam, ut omnis caritas aut inter duos aut inter paucos iungeretur.' trans. W. A. Falconer.

¹³⁹ *Fam.* VI, 3, 2.

¹⁴⁰ *Fam.* VI, 3, 3: Idque non modo in tanta amicitia, sed ne in comuni etiam societate hominum dici posse Satyricus ait, ubi viro bono nullum alienum malum, et humano generi pietatis ad indicium datas a natura lacrimas docet. Quod tanto ante Comicus dixerat:

Having observed the infrequency with which Petrarch used the words ‘*caritas*’ and ‘*benevolentia*’, this language of this passage is striking. Combined with the unusual phrase ‘*in angustam*’, Petrarch’s ‘*caritate...ac benevolentia*’ seems deliberately to echo Cicero, *De amicitia*, V-VI, 20. The sense, however, is the absolute opposite of Cicero’s original and the repetition of vocabulary seems designed to emphasise the difference between the two texts. Rather than friendship benefiting from being a condensed version of the social bond, as Cicero suggested, love – from which friendship derives its name – is limited when it is restricted in this fashion. The concept of ‘*universalis amor*’ which implicitly underwrites this passage appears to have as its source the second commandment, and a point of comparison can be found in a letter written by St. Augustine to Proba in 412, known to Petrarch by the name ‘*De orando Dei*’ and included on the list of his favourite books.¹⁴¹ In this letter, Augustine repeated his belief that the love of God precludes the possibility of distinguishing friends and neighbours. As a result, Proba could not restrict friendship to the few, but should open *amicitia* to the whole of humanity. *Amicitia* ‘embraces all to whom love and kindly affection (*amor et dilectio*) are due,’ Augustine wrote,

although the heart goes out to some of these more freely, to others more cautiously; yes, it even extends to enemies, for whom we are commended to pray. There is accordingly no-one in the whole human family to whom kindly affection is not due by reason of the bond of a common humanity (*communis naturae societate*), although it may not be due on ground of a reciprocal love.¹⁴²

Augustine, like Petrarch, looked to Cicero for inspiration, but similarly diverged from his source when it came to *amicitia* and human society. This is no mere coincidence. Their shared willingness to project friendship outwards is a reflection of a common determination to base *amicitia* on a form of Christian love which had its purest human expression in the love for one’s neighbour, rather than on a more antiquated, classical form of *amor* which was intrinsically personal, subjective and exclusive.

While Lafleur is therefore not unjustified in drawing attention to aspects which appear redolent of Cicero or Seneca, it does not seem possible to contend that Petrarch’s understanding of *amicitia* was necessarily either Ciceronian or Senecan in substance. It is, moreover, equally difficult to sustain the contention that Petrarch’s exploration of friendship

“Homo sum, humani a me nichil alienum puto.”

Enimvero licet id verum esse non negem, tamen haud dubie, in hoc publico diligendi debito, gradus sunt, quibus ex amplissima, ut ita dixerim, humanitatis area, cognationis amicitieque redigimur in angustam, et universalis amor omnium singulari quadam caritate paucorum ac benevolentia coarctatur.’ referring to Juvenal, *Sat.* XV, 140-2, 130-1; quoting Terence, *Heaut.* 77; referring to Cicero, *De amicitia*, V-VI, 20.

¹⁴¹ Ullman, *Studies in the Italian Renaissance*, 117-137.

¹⁴² Augustine, *Ep.* 130, vi, 13, quoted in Carmichael, *Friendship*, 60-1.

was either aphoristic or lacking in coherence, or unrelated to the broader concerns of moral philosophy. Although an emphasis on the specifically Ciceronian and Senecan features of Petrarch's argument may give the appearance of the piecemeal construction of an incomplete set of borrowed axioms, a recognition of the interpenetration of Christian *amor* and the language of classical *amicitia* allows an appreciation of a more coherent and unified approach to friendship which forms an active component of the wider moral concerns which exercised Petrarch in the *Secretum*, the *De otio religioso* and the *De vita solitaria*.

4. Friendship and solitude: from the general to the particular

Although it does not occur as frequently as Zeitlin appears to suggest in the introduction to his translation, friendship is very much a part of the *De vita solitaria*. The work itself was inspired by a friend's visit to Vacluse¹⁴³ and it was conceived not merely as a tithe offered to a local prelate, but also as a literary gift given as a token of friendship.¹⁴⁴ As several scholars have pointed out, solitude was never intended to involve complete social isolation, and was from the first presented as being bound up with the presence of a small number of good friends.¹⁴⁵

At Z I, ix, 4, Petrarch outlined the relationship between friendship and his understanding of the practice of solitude. Having upbraided Seneca for an apparent inconsistency,¹⁴⁶ he claims that he has never advised those people for whom solitude would be advantageous to shun friendship. 'I say,' he writes, 'that crowds – not friends – should be fled.'¹⁴⁷ In fact, provided the *solitarius* is not disturbed by large numbers, and is visited by those who bring comfort and help to his *otium*, Petrarch would certainly not deny him friends.¹⁴⁸ True isolation could, after all, have a numbing effect on even the greatest pleasures. Pointing to the *De amicitia*, he approves of Archytas of Tarentum's belief that no man could be happy on earth, regardless of his affluence, or in heaven, with all the beauty of the stars laid out before him, unless he had someone with whom to share such things.¹⁴⁹ Without a friend, the isolation of literal solitude could be unendurable and it is this fact which emphasises how much the *solitarius* should value friendship:

¹⁴³ *De vita solitaria*, 'Ad Philippum Cavallicensem Episcopum'; *Prose*, 290-92.

¹⁴⁴ *De vita solitaria*, 'Ad Philippum Cavallicensem Episcopum'; *Prose*, 290.

¹⁴⁵ e.g. Zeitlin, 'Introduction', 55; Bosco, *Petrarca*, 110; Constable, 'Petrarch and Monasticism', 64.

¹⁴⁶ *De vita solitaria*, Z I, ix, 3; P I, vii; *Prose*, 370-72.

¹⁴⁷ *De vita solitaria*, Z I, ix, 4; P I, vii: '... turbas non amicos fugiendos dico.' *Prose*, 372.

¹⁴⁸ *De vita solitaria*, Z I, ix, 4; P I, vii; *Prose*, 372.

¹⁴⁹ *De vita solitaria*, Z I, ix, 4; P I, vii; *Prose*, 374, referring to Cicero, *De amicitia*, XXIII, 88.

Since solitude – though adorned with such great goods – would seem intolerable even to headstrong minds and to those who despise human intercourse if it were without a confidant, how ought it appear to the mild and those endowed with humanity? If a single person's conversation is believed to bring such comfort to those ignorant of friendship, what will be brought to the cultivators of true friendships by the conversation of a loyal friend, in whom they may see themselves, from whom they may hear the truth, and with whom, as the same Cicero says, they may talk as if with themselves...¹⁵⁰

Although the mob, the wicked, the idle and the ignorant should always be avoided,¹⁵¹ there was no doubt that a friend would enrich solitude rather than disturb it.¹⁵²

Having observed the Christian notion of *amor* which informed Petrarch's conception of *amicitia*, the description of friendship at Z I, ix, 4 appears somewhat puzzling. In common with many of the other works which we have examined, the passage bristles with references to Cicero and Seneca. In contrast with other works, however, the manner in which these classical references are manipulated seems to correspond more precisely with the sense of the texts from which they were drawn than with the implications of a Christian understanding of *amor*. As in the *De amicitia*, the friendship described at Z I, ix, 4 is unashamedly exclusive. Framed in apparently subjective terms, friendship is presented as something which should exist between a *solitarius* and only a few select companions. Far from being warmly embraced, the majority of humankind are either silently excluded or explicitly spurned. The wicked, the idle and the ignorant are not the sort of people with whom a *solitarius* should share his solitude. It is difficult to think of something further from the spirit of the second commandment and more firmly removed from the sense of *De remediis*, I, 69.

Although Z I, ix, 4 seems to cause difficulties for our understanding of both solitude and friendship in Petrarch's thought, the problems are much less troubling than they first appear. By seemingly clinging to a superficially Ciceronian idea of a bond between only a small number of friends¹⁵³ to the exclusion of the wicked, idle and ignorant, Petrarch is neither contradicting his Christian conception of *amor*, nor propounding a more faithful interpretation of classical notions of friendship, but reflecting a caesura in Patristic thought and medieval monastic theology. While, as we have seen, the Church Fathers and later monastics placed a strong emphasis on the universality of *amor*, there was nevertheless a

¹⁵⁰ *De vita solitaria*, Z I, ix, 4; *P I*, vii: 'Cum igitur tantis bonis ornata solitudo, si particeps careat, intolerabilis etiam ferocibus animis humanumque perosis commercium videatur, quid mitibus et humanitate peditis videri debet? Quod si amicitie ignaris collocutor unus tantum solatii afferre creditur, quid veris amicitie cultoribus fidelis amici conversatio allatura sit, in quo se se videant, ex quo verum audiant, cum quo, ut Cicero idem ait, sic omnia loqui audeant ut secum...' *Prose*, 376.

¹⁵¹ *De vita solitaria*, Z I, ix, 4; *P I*, vii; *Prose*, 376.

¹⁵² *ibid.*

¹⁵³ c.f. Cicero, *De amicitia*, V, 20.

strong tendency towards the particular. The influence of Stoic and Ciceronian thought is strongly felt, but it is overlaid with a sense of spiritual closeness which derives its meaning from the soul's pursuit of Christian virtue. In his *Rule*, for example, St. Augustine absorbed classical notions of perfect friendship, but located them within the context of early monastic asceticism without in any way impinging on the Christian's obligation to love all humanity for love of Christ.¹⁵⁴ Although, as McGuire has observed, there is little evidence surviving from the early medieval period, the works of Anselm of Bec signal a return to the line of classically-inspired thought which Augustine had pioneered. Following Augustine, Anselm began to explore the bond which could be formed between two (or at most a few) individuals when each looked for virtue deep within his own soul.¹⁵⁵ This recurred frequently in late medieval monastic thought. For Aelred of Rievaulx, for example, seeking inspiration from Aristotelian and Ciceronian ideas of *amicitia perfecta*,¹⁵⁶ *amicitia spiritualis* had to be viewed as an expression of a yearning for God, but could only be understood in contrast to the more general forms of love which were incumbent upon the believer. A spiritual friendship could not, for Aelred, apply to the entire of humanity, or even to the whole of a monastic community. Rather, it was a form of friendship which

is clearly an exceptional instance reserved for very few monastics, the most virtuous, disciplined and privileged. ... spiritual friends must have a place where they can withdraw from their brothers in order to exchange confidences.¹⁵⁷

Given the relative paucity of the evidence in the *De vita solitaria*, it would be incautious to draw conclusions too quickly. In light of the strong Patristic and monastic tradition of close friendship between a restricted number of companions, however, it would be similarly incautious to regard the apparent approbation of Stoic and Ciceronian thought in Z I, ix, 4 necessarily as a reflection of inconsistency. Petrarch's comments on *amicitia* in this passage must be read in context – that is to say, through the lens of solitude.

As we have seen in the previous chapter, solitude – like *otium* – was primarily an interior condition, a *solitudo animi*. Although it could manifest itself physically, in the desire to seek out lonely places in the countryside (*solitudo loci*), for example, it consisted in the expurgation of worldly desires and the orientation of the self towards the divine through the

¹⁵⁴ G. Lawless, 'Augustine's Decentring of Asceticism,' in Dodaro and Lawless, eds., *Augustine and his Critics*, 142-63, here 150. See also G. Lawless, *Augustine of Hippo and His Monastic Rule*, (Oxford, 1987); R. A. Markus, 'Vie monastique et ascétisme chez Augustin,' in *Congresso internazionale su S. Agostino nel XVI centenario della conversione, Roma, 15-20 settembre 1986*, (Rome, 1987), 1:119-25.

¹⁵⁵ McGuire, *Friendship and Community*, 212ff.

¹⁵⁶ Hyatte, *The Arts of Friendship*, 62.

¹⁵⁷ *ibid.*, 67.

use of reason. Despite numerous allusions to classical notions of the *vita contemplativa*, the concept of solitude which emerges from the *De vita solitaria* is intrinsically Christian, and Petrarch's reasoning in the text not only mirrors that in the *De otio religioso*, but also reflects the early-Augustinian ethic found in the *Secretum*. As a result, it seems somewhat unreasonable to suppose that Petrarch's reference to 'the conversation of a loyal friend' at Z I, ix, 4 should be read as an unequivocal statement of an underlying Ciceronianism or Stoicism. Given his willingness to exploit a certain overlap between the writings of St. Augustine and classical texts, the combination of the rational expurgation of worldly desires and the urge for the company of a restricted number of friends seems to fit well with late medieval, classical and Patristic ideas of spiritual friendship.

The objection that there is no detailed explanation of the relationship between the generality of the love of one's neighbour and the particularity of the love of a few select friends should not be cause for disquiet. On the one hand, it is important to observe that a detailed discussion of the love of one's neighbour would not have been germane to the function of the *De vita solitaria*, while on the other hand, it is worth reflecting on the sometimes ambiguous relationship between general and particular loves in medieval and Patristic texts. Indeed, Petrarch's apparent willingness to explore both the *amor propinquitatis* and the *amor paucorum* as separate forms of the same love in different texts might readily be thought of as a deliberate dalliance with the parallelism of the same themes within the Christian tradition of friendship.

Although passages referring explicitly to friendship are relatively rare in the *De vita solitaria*, it is possible to adduce further evidence which illustrates the compatibility of Z I, ix, 4 with sentiments expressed in his other works. Petrarch's willingness to adapt the terms of classical friendship to a distinctly Christian context is demonstrated especially well at Z I, iv, 8. In this passage, Petrarch discreetly took issue with both Cicero and Seneca. He agreed with the ancient philosophers that it was quite sensible to set a friend whose virtue you admire to guard over you, and to act always as if there were a friend present to witness your deeds.¹⁵⁸ In contrast to Cicero and Seneca, who couched their advice in terms of the imagined presence of a friend, however, Petrarch argued that 'it is not necessary for us', presumably referring to Philippe de Cabassoles and himself.¹⁵⁹ Christ is always present with a Christian and hence is a 'true witness not only of our deeds, but also of all our thoughts.'¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁸ *De vita solitaria*, Z I, iv, 8; P I, v; *Prose*, 348-50, referring to Cicero, *Ep. ad Quintum*, I, i, 46; Seneca, *Ep.* xxv, 5-6; *Ep.* xi, 10.

¹⁵⁹ *De vita solitaria*, Z I, iv, 8; P I, v: 'Et hoc quidem de imaginario teste vite philosophicum consilium, inter suos non inutile nobis non necessarium.' *Prose*, 350.

¹⁶⁰ *De vita solitaria*, Z I, iv, 8; P I, v: '... hunc in his literulis obtineat locum ut quod diximus appareat, tali teste cristianum hominem non egere, cui non Epycurus aut Cicero, non Cato, non Scipio,

Christ is, in a clearly classical fashion, the friend of the virtuous man, the friend of the *solitarius*.

Despite the fact that comments specifically addressing friendship are uncommon in the *De vita solitaria*, the place of *amicitia* in the tract is telling. The manner in which intimate friendships with a select few is expressed and related to solitude, and the appropriation of the Ciceronian-Senecan idea of the friend as witness and guide illustrate two things.

First, both Z I, ix, 4 and Z, iv, 8 neatly encapsulate the heuristic attitude which governed Petrarch's approach to *amicitia* and which we have observed supporting the *De remediis utriusque fortune* and the letters. Although freely using a classical vocabulary of friendship and alluding frequently to important Roman texts, these passages illustrate that Petrarch was willing to read classical texts as pointing towards the Christian tradition of thought on *amicitia* and to interpret them in the same teleological fashion as we observed in our earlier analysis of the *Secretum*. While it is tempting to regard a quotation from Cicero's *De amicitia* or Seneca's *Epistolae*, for example, as an instance of the assimilation of classical notions of friendship, Petrarch's interpretative attitude was not governed by the historicist assumptions underpinning such a line of thought. For him, a quotation, reference or word derived its meaning from the perspective from which it was viewed. Cicero's *De amicitia* or Seneca's *Epistolae* were texts which were mined for apposite quotations about friendship not because the original intentional meaning of given passages was significant in itself, but because passages could appear to convey a meaning appropriate to one writing from a later Christian perspective, or because they pointed towards the full realisation of Christian notions of friendship in the works of St. Ambrose, St. Augustine, St. Aelred of Rievaulx and others.

Second, the place of intimate friendships within the context of solitude is in many ways indicative of the unity of Petrarch's conception of the life of virtue. In previous chapters, we have seen that the search for virtue is commensurate with the search for *otium* – as an interior leisure from worldliness – and with the search for solitude – as a peacefulness of mind. Petrarch's conception of friendship is similarly bound up with the notion of virtue. Like *otium* and solitude, it is an expression of the orientation of the self towards God through the application of reason. Similarly, the practice of true friendship is in some ways intrinsic to the pursuit of virtue, in the same manner as *otium* and solitude. Where *amicitia* is

non Lelius imaginatione fingendus sed angelus bone vite custos comesque datus homini, quo spectante, siquis est pudor, audere non debet quod coram homine non auderet. Et, quod summum ac terribile dixerim, Cristus ipse locis omnibus atque temporibus est presens, non actuum sed et cogitatum omnium verus testis, quos etsi vere afforet testis epycurus, non videret.' *Prose*, 350.

understood as a function of Christian *amor*, it is a necessary part of loving properly, and hence an essential component of virtue itself. Just as in the case of *otium* and solitude, however, the relationship between friendship and virtue involves individual effort and entails subjective benefit. In the same way as the condition of *otium* requires leisure to be used for 'work' (such as the reading of saints' lives), the universal *amicitia* which is an expression of a true *amor Dei* requires the cultivation of personal friendships. Despite the wise man's obligation to love all humanity, it is a condition of his virtue that he attends closely to his moral health, and for this a few intimate friends are essential.

Eloquence and philosophy

1. Rhetoric, Humanism, Renaissance

The Greek word *ῥητορική* is first recorded in Plato's *Gorgias*.¹ At the beginning of the dialogue, the sophist Gorgias argues that *ῥητορική* should be understood as 'the work of persuasion (*πειθώ*)'.² Although in the course of its long history, *ῥητορική* and its derivatives have 'had changing associations with other subjects and disciplines that have significantly affected the way [they themselves are] understood', Plato's identification of rhetoric with persuasion remains at the heart of the concept.³ Adapting George Kennedy's distinction between 'primary' and 'secondary' rhetoric, Ronald Witt has pointed out that rhetoric can be applied in either an oratorical or a literary sense,⁴ but in either case the role of *πειθώ* is of central importance. Intrinsically bound up with the need to persuade the listener or reader, 'rhetoric relates to invention, arrangement and especially to style – in other words to the particular selection of words and their order'.⁵ While Plato used it to mean 'persuasion', it is telling that *πειθώ* can also be used to describe a form of winning eloquence. The 'work of persuasion' is, in other words, part of the art of speaking or writing well.

Since the publication of Paul Oskar Kristeller's article 'Humanism and Scholasticism in the Renaissance', rhetoric has been seen as one of the most important

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¹ G. A. Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric & Its Christian and Secular Tradition from Ancient to Modern Times*, 2nd ed., (Chapel Hill and London, 1999), 1; G. A. Kennedy, *A New History of Classical Rhetoric*, (Princeton, 1994), 12-13.

² Plato, *Gorgias*, 453a2.

³ P. O. Kristeller, 'Rhetoric in Medieval and Renaissance Culture,' in J. J. Murphy, ed., *Renaissance Eloquence. Studies in the Theory and Practice of Renaissance Rhetoric*, (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1983), 1-20, here 1.

⁴ Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric*, 2-4; R. G. Witt, *In the Footsteps of the Ancients. The Origins of Humanism from Lovato to Bruni* (Leiden, 2003), 8-9. For a critique of 'primary' and 'secondary' rhetoric see also M. C. Wood, 'The Teaching of Writing in Medieval Europe,' in J. J. Murphy, ed., *A Short History of Writing Instruction from Ancient Greece to Twentieth-Century America*, (Davis CA, 1990), 77-94.

⁵ Witt, *Footsteps*, 9.

distinguishing characteristics of Renaissance humanism.⁶ Although in later years he was careful to emphasise that humanism was far from ‘reducible to rhetoric alone’,⁷ Kristeller nevertheless argued that ‘[t]he humanistic movement did not originate in the field of philosophical or scientific studies, but ...arose in that of grammatical and rhetorical studies.’⁸ Although it is not possible to contend that humanists were *ipso facto* professional rhetoricians,⁹ eloquence was the medium for – and sometimes inspiration of – the humanistic interest in classical philology and philosophy.¹⁰ For Hanna Gray, ‘[t]he bond which united humanists, no matter how far separated in outlook or in time, was a conception of eloquence and its uses.’¹¹

This conception of eloquence was not such that would allow humanistic writing to be characterised pejoratively as ‘merely rhetorical’. Mirroring the close relationship between chairs of moral philosophy and rhetoric or poetry at Italian universities from the fifteenth century onwards, the *vera eloquentia* was identified closely with ethical concerns and contrasted with ‘sophistry’.¹² As Gray has observed, ‘True eloquence, according to the humanists, could arise only out of a harmonious union between wisdom and style; its aim was to guide men toward virtue and worthwhile goals, not to mislead them for vicious or trivial purposes.’¹³ The idea that ‘true’ eloquence should urge the listener or reader to adhere

⁶ P. O. Kristeller, ‘Humanism and Scholasticism in the Renaissance,’ *Byzantion* 17 (1944-45): 346-74, reprinted in P. O. Kristeller, *Studies in Renaissance Thought and Letters* (Rome, 1956), 553-83 and idem, *Renaissance Thought. The Classic, Scholastic and Humanist Strains* (New York, 1961), 92-119. All page subsequent references to this article will relate to *Renaissance Thought*. For an interesting examination of the conceptions of the Renaissance offered by Kristeller and Eugenio Garin, see C. Celenza, *The Lost Italian Renaissance: Humanists, Historians and Latin’s Legacy* (Baltimore, 2004).

⁷ Kristeller, ‘Rhetoric in Medieval and Renaissance Culture’, 2.

⁸ Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought*, 100.

⁹ Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought*, 102. See also the vigorous debate between Hans Baron and Jerrold Seigel on this subject. J. Seigel, ‘“Civic Humanism” or Ciceronian Rhetoric? The Culture of Petrarch and Bruni,’ *Past and Present* 34 (1966): 1-48; H. Baron, ‘Leonardo Bruni: “Professional Rhetorician” or “Civic Humanist”’ *Past and Present* 36 (1967): 21-37.

¹⁰ The bibliography which has grown up around this point is too vast even for a pretence at comprehensiveness to be attempted, but the classic statements remain Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought*, 102ff; H. H. Gray, ‘Renaissance Humanism: The Pursuit of Eloquence,’ *Journal of the History of Ideas* 24/4 (Oct.-Dec. 1963): 497-514. More recently, see J. Monfasani, ‘Humanism and Rhetoric,’ in Rabil, ed., *Renaissance Humanism. Foundations, Forms and Legacies*, 3:171-235. For the place of this idea within the broader context of competing interpretations of humanism and Renaissance, see, for example, W. J. Bouwsma, ‘Changing Assumptions in Later Renaissance Culture,’ *Viator* 7 (1976): 421-40; idem, *The Culture of Renaissance Humanism*, (American Historical Association, 1973), 9; D. Weinstein, ‘In Whose Image and Likeness? Interpretations of Renaissance Humanism,’ *Journal of the History of Ideas* 33/1 (Jan. – Mar. 1972): 165-176; D. A. LaRusso, ‘Rhetoric in the Italian Renaissance,’ in Murphy, ed., *Renaissance Eloquence*, 37-55; Gouwens, ‘Perceiving the Past’, 55-82, esp. 62f.

¹¹ Gray, ‘Renaissance Humanism’ 498.

¹² Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought*, 109-110; Gray, ‘Renaissance Humanism’, 498; Seigel, *Rhetoric and Philosophy*, xi-xvii, 173; C. Trinkaus, ‘A Humanist’s Image of Humanism: The Inaugural Oration of Bartolommeo della Fonte,’ *Studies in the Renaissance* 7 (1960): 90-147.

¹³ Gray, ‘Renaissance Humanism’, 498.

to the good was the basis for the humanistic critique of scholasticism. While scholasticism and humanism developed in parallel in Italy and did not clash over substantial philosophical issues, humanists from the early fourteenth century were accustomed to attack the schoolmen for the ugliness of their style and for their failure to concentrate sufficiently on the inculcation of wisdom.¹⁴

Although the eloquence of the humanists retained many links with the rhetoric of the medieval *artes dictaminis*, especially as a result of French influences, it is generally held that this association between wisdom and eloquence – or between rhetoric and philosophy, as it is sometimes expressed – was inherited primarily from classical treatises on the subject.¹⁵ As John Ward has pointed out, the ‘sustaining didactic curriculum behind this pursuit of eloquence was classical rhetorical theory,’ and – although Greek rhetoric was later to play an increasingly important role – the primary texts remained Cicero’s *De inventione*, *Orator*, *De oratore*, Quintilian’s *Institutio Oratoria* and the pseudo-Ciceronian *Rhetorica ad Herennium*.¹⁶

In keeping with general interpretations of Renaissance rhetoric, Petrarch adopted a broad and inclusive approach when writing about eloquence, and appears to have been unwilling to distinguish between literary forms. Throughout his life, he used ‘*eloquentia*’ and its cognates to refer to all species of literary composition and reflections of this semantic flexibility can be glimpsed in telling incidental comments. In the *De remediis utriusque fortune*, for example, Petrarch refers to the ‘*utriusque eloquii principes*’,¹⁷ whom he identifies as Cicero and Virgil in the *De vita solitaria* and in a letter to the grammarian

¹⁴ Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought*, 110-17; Gray, ‘Renaissance Humanism’ 499-500; Seigel, *Rhetoric and Philosophy*, 215-18. On scholasticism in Italy, see, for example, H. Rashdall, *The Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages*, ed. F. M. Powicke and A. B. Emden, 2nd ed., (Oxford, 1936), 1:234ff; B. Nardi, ‘L’averroismo Bolognese nel secolo XIII e Taddeo Alderotto,’ *Rivista di Storia della Filosofia* 4 (1949):11-22.

¹⁵ Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought*, 102-3; idem, ‘Rhetoric in Medieval and Renaissance Culture,’ *passim*; Gray, ‘Renaissance Humanism,’ 499-500; Seigel, *Rhetoric and Philosophy*, 173-225; B. L. Ullman, ‘Some Aspects of the Origins of Italian Humanism,’ *Studies in the Italian Renaissance*, 27-40. In the past 25 years, this view has come under increasing criticism and the decisive influence of medieval *dictators* on humanistic style has been brought more clearly into focus. It is, however, still generally assumed that the association between wisdom and eloquence was received primarily from classical, and not medieval treatises. R. Witt, ‘Medieval “*Ars Dictaminis*” and the Beginnings of Humanism: a New Construction of the Problem,’ *Renaissance Quarterly* 35/1 (Spring 1982):1-35; Witt, *Footsteps*, *passim*. c.f. Q. R. D. Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 2 vols., (Cambridge, 1978), 1:23-68.

¹⁶ J. O. Ward, ‘Renaissance Commentators on Ciceronian Rhetoric,’ in Murphy, ed., *Renaissance Eloquence*, 126-73, here 126; Kristeller, ‘Rhetoric in Medieval and Renaissance Culture,’ 3-6; Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric*, 226-30; Gray, ‘Renaissance Humanism,’ 503-4.

¹⁷ *De remediis utriusque fortune*, II, 102: ‘...si hinc dubitas, utriusque eloquii principes interroga...’

Zanobi da Strada.¹⁸ Prose and poetry could equally well be accommodated by ‘*eloquentia*’. But just as ‘*eloquentia*’ denotes a multiplicity of literary forms, ‘*poesis*’ – which ‘shades off’ into grammar as a result of its intimate relationship with grammar¹⁹ – was also used as a synonym for ‘*eloquentia*’ in many of Petrarch’s works, especially in the 1340s and 1350s.²⁰

The flexibility of Petrarch’s rhetorical lexicon is mirrored by what he seems to have regarded as certain points of commonality between different fields of endeavour. Apparently more interested in the uses of eloquence than in its technical dimensions, he was exercised particularly by a perceived relationship between poetry and moral philosophy. In the *Posteritati*, for example, he claimed that he had always had a particular aptitude for moral philosophy and poetry, and, even though he admitted that he had abandoned the latter for the former in later years, the two seem implicitly yoked together.²¹ Numerous works were devoted to exploring this relationship and the problem of how – or if – the two might be combined recurred throughout his life. In addition to the *Invective contra medicum* and the *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia* – in which his position as a poet was defended against the claims of contemporary Aristotelians – Petrarch addressed the theme constructively in numerous letters, in the *De remediis utriusque fortune*, and perhaps most strikingly in the Coronation Oration and the *Africa*.

Petrarch occupies an important place in the historiography of Renaissance rhetoric and is especially significant for interpretations of the development of the relationship between eloquence and wisdom. Although, concentrating particularly on technical aspects of the discipline, Witt has attempted to present him as part of a broader rhetorical trend, contributors to which included Lovato dei Lovati and Albertino Mussato, Petrarch is generally held to have played an important role in elaborating a set of intellectual tools for navigating the waters between moral philosophy and rhetoric.²² Kennedy evokes general historical opinion in attributing to Petrarch a pivotal role, contending that he ‘envisioned a synthesis of wisdom and eloquence in both civil and academic context, and this view was taken up by some of his successors, including Coluccio Salutati and Lorenzo Valla.’²³

¹⁸ *De vita solitaria* Z I, v, 2; P I, vii; *Prose*, 366-8; *Fam.* XII, 3, 18.

¹⁹ Kallendorf, *In Praise of Aeneas*, 25.

²⁰ For later continuations of this, see, for example, B. Vickers, ‘Rhetoric and Poetics,’ in C. B. Schmitt, Q. Skinner, E. Kessler and J. Kraye, eds., *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1988), 715-45, here 715-24.

²¹ *Posteritati* (*Sen.* XVIII, 1); *Prose*, 6.

²² Witt, *Footsteps*, 230-91.

²³ Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric*, 228. So also Seigel, *Rhetoric and Philosophy*, 31-2, referring to H. Weisinger, ‘Who Began the Revival of Learning? The Renaissance Point of View,’ *Papers of the Michigan Academy* 29 (1944):561-7. Also J. Seigel, ‘Ideals of Eloquence and Silence in Petrarch,’ *Journal of the History of Ideas* 26 (1965): 146-74.

Interpretations of Petrarch's rhetorical theory vary widely and any attempt to synthesise them fully would perhaps be in vain, but although disagreement over detail abounds, there is nevertheless broad consensus for the view that his thought on the relationship was characterised by certain features. Despite implying a connection in the *Posteritati*, Petrarch is seen to have perceived a tension between the persuasive function of rhetoric and the demands or methods of moral philosophy. In attempting to resolve this tension, he came to qualify his admiration for true philosophy by arguing that there were circumstances in which eloquence was superior to, or even supplanted moral philosophy as a source of truth. In formulating this resolution, it is held that Petrarch drew on a multiplicity of sources, but – while his thought could nevertheless not be described as a simple copy of Cicero's rhetorical theory – his understanding of the relationship between eloquence and moral philosophy was based primarily on a Ciceronian model.

Although Petrarch was drawn to the idea of a simple and harmonious union, he was, for Jerrold Seigel, deeply troubled by the possibility that the literary practices proper to eloquence would lead him into self-contradiction.²⁴ While he prized consistency highly, Petrarch knew that 'a basic rhetorical principle directed the orator to fit his speech not only to his subject, but also to his audience and circumstances. As these changed, so must the orator's message.'²⁵ Consequently, although Petrarch accepted that 'the ideal of wisdom was more exalted than the ideal of eloquence ... he sometimes described true philosophy in a way which suggested that it was dependent on genuine eloquence.'²⁶ While the Stoic ideal of virtue 'met with the highest standards of truth and consistency,' its rigorous strictures sometimes proved so demanding that they could only be followed by transcending human nature.²⁷ The more flexible teachings of the Peripatetics – which were 'most relevant to the lives of ordinary men' – were thus attractive where the unbending message of Stoic philosophy might have been inappropriate.²⁸ Drawing heavily on Cicero's works, Seigel argues that Petrarch adopted both perspectives, giving priority to one or the other as circumstances required. He was, then, able to speak 'as a philosopher on behalf of the Stoics with as much force as he employed in speaking as an orator on behalf of the Peripatetics.'²⁹

In *The Poet as Philosopher*, Charles Trinkaus implicitly accepts that the task of eloquence was moral suasion, but conflates Petrarch's understanding of 'philosophy' with dialectical reasoning in suggesting that he saw poetry as offering rival and superior access to

²⁴ Seigel, *Rhetoric and Philosophy*, 34-49.

²⁵ *ibid.*, 49.

²⁶ *ibid.*, 35.

²⁷ *ibid.*, 56.

²⁸ *ibid.*, 53.

²⁹ *ibid.*, 57.

moral truths. Concentrating heavily on two of the invectives, Trinkaus contends that Petrarch ‘proposed that poetic theology and rhetoric, rather than philosophy were the intellectual instruments and disciplines best fitted for the pursuit of the Christian goal of salvation and the cure of souls.’³⁰ In part, this rests on the view that the practice of poetry was, like the practice of philosophy, in some way associated with moral discovery. Responding to the insults of the papal physician in the *Invective contra medicum*, Petrarch countered the claim that poetry should be subordinate to medicine by substituting eloquence ‘as the true medium for philosophy and theology rather than the syllogistic demonstrations of dialectic used by the scholastics.’³¹ Contrary to the doctor’s assertions, rhetoric is of no value to one who should cure the body, but is of great value to one who would cure souls. Although it was of sometimes variable quality, poetry was the source of philosophical and theological truths,³² and it has been suggested elsewhere that Petrarch – like Boccaccio – seems to have believed that ‘the gift of poetry is divinely bestowed’, while poets by their nature ‘seek truth and especially truth about God.’³³ In part, however, it was poetry’s persuasive role that allowed it to supplant moral philosophy. In the *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, Trinkaus argues that since the function of rhetoric is to urge men to the good, and the will is the determinant of virtue or vice, Petrarch believed that rhetoric must necessarily move the will. As in the *Invective contra medicum*, this is expressed in opposition to a form of scholasticism. ‘Aristotle’s purpose coincides with Petrarch’s,’ Trinkaus suggests, ‘but Aristotle does not succeed in transforming the will ... Aristotle’s is a rhetorical, not a philosophical failure. One finds the needed force to activate the will instead in Cicero and Seneca and Horace.’³⁴ While it is possible to gain greater learning from Aristotle, a man may derive a more intense longing for the good from works which rely on the precepts of classical rhetoric, even where those works were written by pagan authors.³⁵

It must be granted that the interpretations of which Seigel and Trinkaus offer the fullest treatment are in many ways appealing, despite their differences. In each case, the relationship between moral philosophy and eloquence described speaks to the question of how to reconcile function and subject matter with the implications of oratorical style latent

³⁰ Trinkaus, *The Poet as Philosopher*, 90.

³¹ *ibid.*, 96.

³² *ibid.*, 100-103.

³³ R. G. Witt, ‘Coluccio Salutati and the Conception of the *Poeta Theologus* in the Fourteenth Century,’ *Renaissance Quarterly* 30/4 (Winter 1977):538-63, here 542-3.

³⁴ Trinkaus, *The Poet as Philosopher*, 108; *idem*, ‘The Question of Truth in Renaissance Rhetoric and Anthropology,’ in Murphy, ed., *Renaissance Eloquence*, 207-20, here, 209-10. It is worth noting that in ‘The Question of Truth’, Trinkaus further supports his argument from Petrarch, *De sui ipsius* IV, 111 with reference to *Secretum*, I. See also Seigel, *Rhetoric and Philosophy*, 40-1; Witt, *Footsteps*, 244-5; Quillen, *Rereading the Renaissance*, 220-21 (noting also 170-78).

³⁵ Gray, ‘Renaissance Humanism,’ 501.

even in the treatment of *ῥητορικὴ* in Plato's *Gorgias*. When their methodology is considered more closely, however, it does not seem unreasonable to treat these interpretations with some caution.

Both Seigel and Trinkaus predicate their arguments on the contention that Petrarch perceived a tension between eloquence and philosophy. Although in many ways instinctively attractive, however, the identification of this tension appears in large degree to be a function of the evidential approaches adopted. In *Rhetoric and Philosophy in Renaissance Humanism*, Seigel is initially prepared to countenance the possibility of eloquence and moral philosophy having enjoyed a relatively close association, but comes to argue that, despite the implications of the *Posteritati*, Petrarch was tortured by the possibility that the 'consistency' of the philosophical positions which he aspired to manifest was compromised by the potential for 'inconsistency' latent within eloquence itself. This idea, and its importance to Petrarch's thought is first justified in relation to a confusion of stylistic imitation and the emulation of virtuous figures, and to the suggestion that the single word '*consonas*' in a letter to Tomasso da Messina infers a preoccupation with logical consistency. Developing the argument further, however, Seigel uses a reading of Petrarch's 'inner struggles' in the *Secretum* as additional evidence for a tension between eloquence and moral philosophy. Observing that Franciscus was tormented by the difficulty of reconciling his appetite for glory with his desire for virtue, and associating much of Augustinus' recommendation of virtue with Stoicism, Seigel infers that Petrarch saw a tension between his aspiration to eloquence and his moral sentiments. Pursuing this method, the resolution of the perceived tension – based on a pragmatic equivocation between different approaches – is then derived from the supposed moral content of different works. Although, as some reviewers observed, Seigel attaches a sometimes vague meaning to the word 'philosophy',³⁶ it is striking that in proposing the idea of a tension, he relies not on a searching analysis of Petrarch's actual statements of the relationship between eloquence and moral philosophy, but on a questionable reading of incidental remarks and a blurring of the distinction between moral sentiments and rhetorical theory derived from a problematic understanding of key texts. The confusion of apparently 'Stoical' and 'Peripatetic' maxims (attributions which are themselves, as we have already seen, debateable) with the rhetorical strategies adopted by those schools seems not only to erode the wider validity of Seigel's conclusion, but also calls into question his evaluation of the nature of the tension between moral philosophy and eloquence.

³⁶ H. H. Gray, Review of *Rhetoric and Philosophy in Renaissance Humanism: The Union of Eloquence and Wisdom, Petrarch to Valla* by Jerrold Seigel, *American Historical Review* 75/4 (Apr. 1970):1096-1098, here 1097.

The idea of 'tension' is expressed in a rather different form by Charles Trinkaus, but the questions which may be raised about his method of justification are nonetheless troubling. In *The Poet as Philosopher*, Trinkaus' analysis is based almost exclusively on the evidence of the *Invective contra medicum* and the *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, and, while this is not in itself improper, the reluctance to place these texts in a broader context and to treat key terms with more precision appears to have coloured the conclusions drawn. Although Petrarch's rebuttal of Aristotelianism deserves close attention in relation to his conception of poetry, it seems somewhat unconvincing not only to conflate 'philosophy' with dialectical reasoning, but also to infer from this that poetry was intended to supplant moral philosophy *tout court* in Petrarch's wider understanding of the nature of eloquence. By the same token, Petrarch's somewhat elusive prose may present the reader with a number of interpretational problems, but it is nevertheless striking that Trinkaus seems to not distinguish clearly between poetic composition and the reading of poetry, and thus confidence in the assertion that poetry *per se* was for Petrarch the 'source' of philosophical and theological truths seems to be weakened. Perhaps of greatest importance to Trinkaus' argument, however, is the assumption of an underlying voluntarism in the *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*. The emphasis on the will as the determinant of virtue provides the basis for Trinkaus' understanding of Petrarch's 'rhetorical' objection to philosophy. In previous chapters, however, we have seen that – far from embracing the Stoic doctrine of the will – Petrarch adhered to the moral theology of the young St. Augustine. Although the *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia* and even the *Invective contra medicum* contain passages which appear to be redolent of the New Academy, it has been shown that they may be viewed as consistent with an ethical system which presents the rational apprehension of the *vera felicitas* as the prelude to the abandonment of worldly desires and the formation of a lasting love of God. Recognising this, it is necessary to question not merely Trinkaus' assertion that poetry should supplant moral philosophy, but also his contention that the two were intrinsically in conflict.

The inference of Ciceronianism in Petrarch's rhetorical theory appears to be more robust. The esteem in which Petrarch held Cicero cannot, of course, be denied and it would be ill-judged to dismiss the care with which he studied and quoted from texts such as the *De oratore*, the *Orator* and the *De inventione*. The fact, however, that questions may be raised about the approaches followed by both Seigel and Trinkaus, however, necessarily casts some doubt on the validity of describing the relationship between eloquence and moral philosophy outlined in his works as 'Ciceronian'. This is not to say that Petrarch's appeals to Cicero's authority and frequent references to his rhetorical treatises were insincere, but in the absence

of the voluntarism so important to Trinkaus, and the eclecticism relied upon by Seigel, it would be incautious to infer from them that there was any deeper conceptual affinity. As with the apparently 'Stoical' passages in the *Secretum*, it is perhaps too easy to overlook Petrarch's capacity to have alluded to Cicero's works with propriety from within the context of a quite different rhetorical tradition.

Despite the immense strides which have been taken in the field in the last sixty years, it does not seem unjust to suggest that when referring to Petrarch there is still something of a tendency to write the history of rhetoric – in Richard McKeon's words – 'as the monotonous enumeration of doctrine, or preferably sentences, repeated from Cicero, or commentators on Cicero.'³⁷ Commenting on Seigel's *Rhetoric and Philosophy in Renaissance Humanism*, reviewers observed a tendency to '[leap] from Cicero to Petrarch as if nothing had intervened in all that time'³⁸ and to dismiss 'the specifically Christian component ... of "wisdom"'.³⁹ This tendency has, however, proved remarkably durable and little effort has been made to examine more closely Cicero's role in later rhetorical theory in relation to Petrarch's understanding of the relationship between eloquence and philosophy.⁴⁰

There is little doubt that Cicero exerted an immense influence on the shape of rhetorical theory from late Antiquity to the fourteenth century.⁴¹ It would, however, be mistaken to suppose either that his understanding of rhetoric was treated in the same manner at all times by all people, or that his influence was not in some respects matched or surpassed by that of other figures. Although Cicero remained an important point of reference for virtually all rhetorical theorists throughout Antiquity and the Middle Ages, the history of the use of his thought in this area is neither simple nor strictly linear, with portions of his conception of eloquence having different resonance depending on the tradition (philosophical, theological, rhetorical, logical etc.) from within which a particular author was

³⁷ R. McKeon, 'Rhetoric in the Middle Ages,' *Speculum* 17/1 (Jan. 1942):1-32, here 1.

³⁸ J. J. Murphy, Review of *Rhetoric and Philosophy in Renaissance Humanism: The Union of Eloquence and Wisdom, Petrarch to Valla* by Jerrold Seigel, *Speculum* 45/1 (Jan. 1970):169-70, here 169.

³⁹ Gray, Review of *Rhetoric and Philosophy in Renaissance Humanism*, 1097. See also criticisms made in N. Struever, Review of *Rhetoric and Philosophy in Renaissance Humanism: The Union of Eloquence and Wisdom, Petrarch to Valla* by Jerrold Seigel, *History and Theory* 11/1 (1972): 64-74.

⁴⁰ Witt, for example, repeats Seigel's opinion without question and Trinkaus expressly indicates that '[t]he discussion will not try to relate the poetic and rhetorical Christian culture of the Renaissance to its many medieval precedents, at least from Augustine's *De doctrina christiana* to the prescholastic culture of the twelfth century. It assumes what is obvious, that the originality of statement made in a polemical context is not to be sought in the literalness of statement but in relation to the larger context.'; Witt, *Footsteps*, 243 n. 38; Trinkaus, *The Poet as Philosopher*, 90 n.3.

⁴¹ J. O. Ward, *Ciceronian Rhetoric in Treatises, Scholias and Commentary* (Turnholt, 1995) is fundamental, but note also J. J. Murphy, 'Cicero's Rhetoric in the Middle Ages,' *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 53 (1967):334-41; V. Cox, 'Ciceronian Rhetoric in Italy, 1260-1350' *Rhetorica* 17 (1999):239-88.

writing and the immediate end to which his efforts were directed. While it is unnecessary in this context to explore the precise details of the reception and uptake of Cicero's rhetorical works, it is important to note the degree to which he remained a significant point of reference despite the changing valency of his thought and the different purposes which his works were made to serve.

Cicero's treatises affected a multiplicity of fields, ranging from logic to theology, but for many later writers on rhetoric, his suggestion that the orator should have a grounding in that branch of philosophy which was concerned with life and *mores* proved to be of particular significance and served as the basis for the elaboration of the relationship between eloquence and philosophy in a number of different directions. In each case, a palpable connection with the Ciceronian source material was preserved, even where the author deviated from its sense. In Antiquity itself, Quintilian is of particular relevance and, together with Cicero, came to exert a dominant effect on the development of literary rhetoric in the Middle Ages.⁴² Responding to Cicero's treatises in the *Institutio oratoria*, Quintilian presented the association between rhetoric and philosophy as a function of the orator's moral condition. Recognising that Cicero 'was not primarily concerned with the moral aspect', and perhaps distressed by the misuse of rhetoric during Domitian's reign, Quintilian adapted Cicero's rhetorical theory to his own age by arguing that the orator should be '*vir bonus dicendi peritus*'.⁴³ Despite the fragmentary transmission of the *Institutio Oratoria* in later centuries until Poggio Bracciolini's rediscovery of the complete text in 1416,⁴⁴ the notion of the '*vir bonus*' enjoyed considerable popularity and found admirers in Cassiodorus, Fortunatianus and Isidore of Seville, all of whom were also devotees (to one degree or another) of Cicero.

Other avenues of elaboration were also possible. Although of rather less importance to the later evolution of literary rhetoric, Boethius' *De consolazione philosophiae*, a work of considerable importance in the medieval grammar curriculum⁴⁵ and the focus of an extended

⁴² McKeon, 'Rhetoric in the Middle Ages', 4-5; P. S. Boskoff, 'Quintilian in the Late Middle Ages,' *Speculum* 27 (1952):71-8; C. C. Coulter, 'Boccaccio's Knowledge of Quintilian,' *Speculum* 33 (1958): 490-6.

⁴³ Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* 12.1.1. M. Winterbottom, 'Quintilian and the *vir bonus*,' *Journal of Roman Studies* 54/1&2 (1964):90-7, here 90, 96.

⁴⁴ On the rediscovery of the *Institutio Oratoria*, P. G. Gordan, ed. and trans., *Two Renaissance Book Hunters: The Letters of Poggio Bracciolini to Nicolaus de Niccolis*, (New York, 1966), 193-96.

⁴⁵ R. Black and G. Pomaro, *Boethius's Consolation of Philosophy in Italian Medieval and Renaissance Education* (Florence, 2000), 3-34. For the grammar curriculum more generally, see, for example, P. F. Grendler, *Schooling in Renaissance Italy. Literacy and learning, 1300-1600* (Baltimore, 1989); R. Black, 'Italian Renaissance education: changing perspectives and continuing controversies,' *Journal of the History of Ideas* 52/2 (April-June 1991): 315-34; P. F. Grendler, 'Reply to Robert Black,' *Journal of the History of Ideas* 52/2 (April-June 1991): 335-37; R. Black 'Reply to Paul Grendler,' *Journal of the History of Ideas* 52/3 (July-Sept. 1991): 519-20.

controversy during the Renaissance,⁴⁶ strengthened the connection between poetry and philosophy while drawing on Cicero's *De inventione* and *Topica*, as well as Aristotle's *Topics* and the works of Themistius. Although some poetry – whose Muses were derisively describes as '*scenicas meretriculas*' – offered only the goads and disappointments of worldly passions and deserved to be dismissed accordingly, there was another form of poetry – whose Muses belonged to Lady Philosophy – which could serve as the handmaiden of reason and the mouthpiece of truth.⁴⁷ Writing some two centuries earlier than Boethius, Lactantius – who is often described as 'the Christian Cicero' and had a marked impact on the emergence of Christian humanism from late fourteenth century⁴⁸ – rejected the idea that philosophy could lead to truth, but argued that in combining the 'force of divine truth with the power of Academic eloquence', the Christian orator, 'having dispelled and refuted public errors [could] introduce among the human race a brilliant light'.⁴⁹ Unique amongst the Church Fathers for preserving – and even strengthening – Cicero's scepticism, Lactantius contended that the orator was obliged not merely to cling to the truth revealed in Scripture, but also to cultivate a deep knowledge of those philosophical schools whose falsehoods he wished to defeat. Able to argue from all perspectives, he would catch his enemies in the inconsistencies and contradictions of their own arguments and could thus tease out the truth.

St. Augustine, however, is worthy of particular note. Having received a thorough grounding in the subject as young man in North Africa, Augustine himself ultimately became a professor of rhetoric in Milan after teaching in Thagaste, Carthage and Rome.⁵⁰ On the eve of his conversion, he was truly a *vir eloquentissimus* and in his training, Cicero was unquestionably the dominant influence.⁵¹ As Joseph Mazzeo has observed, St. Augustine always remained under the influence of Cicero and treated all of the basic problems of

⁴⁶ L. Panizza, 'Italian humanists and Boethius: was Philosophy for or against Poetry?' in J. Henry and S. Hutton, eds., *New Perspectives on Renaissance Thought: essays in the history of science, education and philosophy in memory of Charles B. Schmitt*, (London, 1990), 48-67.

⁴⁷ Boethius, *De consolazione philosophiae*, I p. 1. I follow Panizza, 'Italian humanists and Boethius', 49-50 n. 4 in disputing the view that Lady Philosophy dismisses poetry *tout court*.

⁴⁸ For Lactantius' reception in late Antiquity, see Jerome, *Ep.* lviii, 10 and Consentius' letters to Augustine in 419, on the latter of which, for example, C. E. Quillen, 'Consentius as a Reader of Augustine's *Confessions*,' *Revue des études augustinienes* 37 (1992): 87-109; idem, *Rereading the Renaissance*, 35-9, 51-63. For an introduction to Lactantius in the Renaissance see L. A. Panizza, 'Lorenzo Valla's *De vero falsoque bono*, Lactantius and Oratorical Scepticism,' *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 41 (1978): 76-109.

⁴⁹ Panizza, 'Lorenzo Valla's *De vero falsoque bono*,' 86.

⁵⁰ Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 23-9, 43-61.

⁵¹ H.-I. Marrou, *Saint Augustin et la fin de la culture antique* (Paris, 1938), 47-83.

rhetoric in Ciceronian terms, although he freely adapted his source to Platonic and Christian contexts.⁵²

In the *De doctrina christiana*, Augustine explained how the teachings of the Bible could be apprehended and communicated to others, and Cicero's influence – alongside that of Scripture itself – is pervasive.⁵³ Having examined how meaning is to be recovered from 'signs' in the first three books, Augustine turned in the fourth book to explain how that which had been discovered could be taught to others. In explaining the rules and types of rhetoric, Augustine adapted Cicero to Christian homiletics, but in emphasising the importance of *ethos* – the moral life of the orator – in convincing listeners, introduced a new element into the Ciceronian tradition which went far beyond the sense of Quintilian's *vir bonus* and which was inspired by Christian Neo-Platonism.⁵⁴

Petrarch knew of a number of the traditions which drew most assiduously – if selectively – from Cicero's rhetorical treatises for inspiration. There is, indeed, much evidence to suggest that he was conscious of the extent to which later writers appropriated aspects of Cicero's thought for their own purpose, and approved the products of this intellectual parasitism, especially those texts which – tellingly – emphasise the moral condition of the orator and the rational pursuit of *felicitas* in approaching eloquence. In a series of marginal comments in his incomplete copy of the *Institutio oratoria* (Paris BN Lat 7720), for example, it is evident that Petrarch paid close attention to Quintilian's relationship to Cicero⁵⁵ and in a fanciful letter written on 7th December 1350, his awareness of the nature of this relationship is made plain. While Cicero's achievement was in no way to be deprecated, Petrarch argued that it was Quintilian who should be seen as having led oratory 'ad supremam eloquii arcem', and viewed almost as a fulfilment of the ideal towards which Cicero had pointed.⁵⁶ As the survival of his manuscript copy of Cassiodorus' *Liber*

⁵² J. A. Mazzeo, 'St. Augustine's Rhetoric of Silence,' *Journal of the History of Ideas* 23/2 (April – June 1962):175-196, here 176.

⁵³ R. P. H. Green, 'Introduction' to Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, trans. R. P. H. Green, (Oxford, 1997), vii-xxiii, here vii-viii.

⁵⁴ Marrou, *Saint Augustin*, 521-31.

⁵⁵ For Petrarch's knowledge of Quintilian, see de Nolhac, *Pétrarque et l'humanisme*, , 2:83-93. In Paris BN Lat 7720, it is worth noting that Petrarch remarks on Quintilian's proximity to ('*Laus ingens et vera M. Tullii Ciceronis*' f.88, *Inst. Orat.* X, i, 108) and divergence from Cicero ('*Modeste admodum a Cicerone dissentit*' f.106v, *Inst. Orat.* XI, iii, 123), and urges himself to remember various comments in which Quintilian seems to cite, praise or refer to Cicero directly (e.g. f. 88, *Inst. Orat.* X, i, 211; f. 95v, *Inst. Orat.* X, vii, 28; f. 110v, *Inst. Orat.* XII, i, 20). For a detailed discussion of Petrarch's immediate reaction to Quintilian, see M. Accame Lanzilotta, 'Le postille del Petrarca a Quintiliano (Cod. Parigino lat 7720),' *Quaderni petrarcheschi*, 5 (1988):1-201.

⁵⁶ *Fam.* XXIV, 7, 4: 'Ille enim suum oratorem per ardua causarum ac sumos eloquentie vertex agit et iudicialibus bellis ad victoriam format; tu longius repetens, oratorem tuum per omnes longe vie flexus ac latebras ab ipsis incunabulis ad supremam eloquii arcem ducis; placet, delectat et mirari cogit; eo namque aspirantibus nichil utilius. Ciceroniana claritas provector illuminat et celsum validis iter

saeculorum litterarum suggests, his understanding of late antique rhetoric was no less developed.⁵⁷ In the *Invective contra medicum*, Petrarch appealed to Boethius and Lactantius as authorities for his identification of poetry with philosophy,⁵⁸ and recognises that Augustine benefited significantly from having studied Cicero's treatises on oratory during his time as a teacher of rhetoric.⁵⁹ Petrarch had, of course, read Augustine's *De doctrina christiana*, and both the *De civitate Dei* and the *Enarrationes in psalmos* are cited as authorities in the discussion of obscurity in the *Invective contra medicum*.⁶⁰ A tantalising preliminary study of techniques employed in the *Invective* by Conrad Rawski even suggests that Petrarch consciously mimicked the rhetorical strategy which Augustine set out in the *De doctrina christiana*.⁶¹ But his knowledge of post-Ciceronian rhetorical theory extended yet further. As Giuseppe Billanovich has shown, he was acquainted with the *Rhetores Latini Minores* – such as Fortunatianus and Victorinus – who combined the Ciceronian tradition with Greek elements, and was no less well versed in other texts studied equally closely in the Middle Ages.⁶² Although it is difficult to find direct evidence for his knowledge of specific medieval texts, it is apparent that in addition to having mastered the techniques of classical eloquence and acquired a knowledge of early Christian rhetorical theory, Petrarch was also highly skilled in the *cursus*, which itself suggest a thorough grounding in the didactic works common to the grammar curriculum in the fourteenth century.⁶³

signat, tua sedulitas ipsos quoque fovet invalidos et optima nutrix ingeniorum, lacte humili teneram pascit infantiam.' Note also *Fam.* I, 8, 13-15; XVIII, 14, 11; XXIV, 2, 10; *Sen.* XVI, 1, 2; *De vita solitaria*, Z I, iv, 3; *P I*, iv; *Prose*, 336.

⁵⁷ q.v. de Nolhac, *Pétrarque et l'humanisme*, 1:205.

⁵⁸ *Invective contra medicum*, I, 33-4 (Boethius); I, 36 (Lactantius); III, 117 (Boethius). There are, of course, numerous other allusions to Boethius – *De consolazione philosophiae* and *De Trinitate* – in Petrarch's writings, on which see de Nolhac, *Pétrarque et l'humanisme*, 2:106-7.

⁵⁹ *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, IV, 126; *Fam.* XXIV, 6, 7.

⁶⁰ C. E. Quillen, 'Plundering the Egyptians: Petrarch and Augustine's *De doctrina christiana*,' in E. D. English, ed., *Reading and Wisdom: The De doctrina christiana of Augustine in the Middle Ages* (Notre Dame, 1995), 153-72; *Invective contra medicum*, III, 133, referring to Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, XI, xv, 19; *En. in psalmos*, cxxvi, 11; cxliv, 12. Conrad Rawski has demonstrated that the *Invective contra medicum* is based on a rhetorical strategy derived from Augustine's *De doctrina christiana*. C. H. Rawski, 'Notes on the Rhetoric in Petrarch's *Invective contra medicum*,' in Aldo Scaglione, ed., *Francis Petrarch, Six Centuries Later. A symposium* (Chapel Hill and Chicago, 1975), 249-77.

⁶¹ Rawski, 'Notes on the Rhetoric in Petrarch's *Invective contra medicum*'.

⁶² G. Billanovich, 'Il Petrarca e i retori latini minori,' *Italia medioevale e umanistica* 5 (1962):103-64, republished in idem, *Petrarca e il Primo Umanesimo* (Padua, 1996), 297-361.

⁶³ Witt, *Footsteps*, 273, 509-14. For further details on Petrarch's use of the *cursus*, see, for example E. Raimondi, 'Correzioni medioevali, correzioni umanistiche e correzioni petrarchesche nella lettera VI del libro XVI delle *Familiars*,' *Studi petrarcheschi* 1 (1948):125-33; G. Martellotti, 'Clausole e ritmi nella prosa narrativa del Petrarca,' in idem, *Scritti petrarcheschi*, ed. M. Feo and S. Rizzo, (Padua, 1983), 207-19; on the grammar curriculum see, for example, G. Billanovich, 'L'insegnamento della grammatica e della retorica nella università italiane tra Petrarca e Guarino,' in J. Ijsewijn and J. Paquet, eds., *The Universities in the Late Middle Ages*, (Leuven, 1978), 365-80.

Rather than there being a necessary tension between moral philosophy and a form of rhetoric modelled after Cicero, the use of post-Ciceronian rhetorical traditions would have allowed a more flexible union of eloquence and moral philosophy to have been offered. Instead of being obliged simply to turn away from espousing a definite ethical position on occasions, or being forced to erect poetry as a rival source of truth to philosophy, Petrarch had numerous precedents for the adaptation of Ciceronian precepts into the structure of rhetorical theories which were developed out of – rather than in opposition to – a desire to harmonise the personal apprehension of truth and the exposition of a specific form of virtue.

The fact that methodological questions may be raised about the idea of ‘tension’ and that Petrarch both knew and approved of a multiplicity of post-Ciceronian rhetorical treatises, however, is in itself insufficient to support the suggestion either that he saw eloquence and moral philosophy to be in harmony, or that he drew inspiration from the many late antique and medieval texts available to him. Although Petrarch was conscious of a number of rhetorical writings which propounded a closer relationship between eloquence and moral philosophy, and was aware of the possibility of integrating elements of Ciceronian rhetoric into a notion of oratory in which such an affinity was of central importance, a much closer analysis of his understanding of this question is necessary before any firm conclusions can be drawn.

2. Moral philosophy and eloquence: discord or harmony?

Despite the questions which may be raised about their arguments, Seigel and Trinkaus are nevertheless quite correct to suggest that in considering the relationship between moral philosophy and eloquence, Petrarch was exercised by the interplay between the function, content and style appropriate to poetic composition, and its implications for the reading of poetry. Rather than being in tension, however, an examination of a broader base of evidence suggests that Petrarch saw moral philosophy and eloquence as enjoying a more harmonious association, in which the literary devices proper to poetry were employed in relation to a purpose and subject matter that overlapped significantly with moral philosophy.

Petrarch’s thought on this subject appears to have undergone some development in the period between the composition of the *Africa* and the completion of the *Posteritati*, a point which has been overlooked in many studies.⁶⁴ Although it would perhaps be incautious

⁶⁴ A rare, but tentative exception is B. Vickers, ‘The recovery of rhetoric: Petrarch, Erasmus, Perelman,’ *History of the Human Sciences* 3 (1990): 415-41, here 419-26. Vickers distinguishes merely between an ‘early’ and a ‘late’ Petrarch.

to attempt a more precise dating, three rough phases seem to be evident in the evolution of his thought concerning eloquence: the first covering the period from early 1337 to late 1345; the second extending from 1347 to around 1351; and the third covering the years 1353 to 1366. While these phases of development merit close consideration, however, Petrarch's treatment of eloquence should not be thought of as having undergone any radical shifts: a common thread runs through each of these periods, and was amplified and elaborated rather than revised or distorted at each stage. Despite recognising that each could in its own way be perverted, Petrarch's explicit engagement with the relationship between moral philosophy and eloquence displays a consistent desire to present them as having a shared preoccupation with the truth. Apparently viewing moral philosophy as a subjective search for the truth, and poetic composition as a persuasive expression of the same truth, the stylistic devices appropriate to eloquence serve to distinguish the one from the other, and responded to the demands of changing audiences, but did not compromise the theoretical harmony of their relationship as long as each discipline was properly conducted. Looking at the same association from a different perspective, truth could either be accessed through the pursuit of true philosophy, or apprehended by recovering the moral principles cloaked by poetic language.

This underlying consistency is to some degree masked by a certain linguistic inconsistency. In the same way as Petrarch was willing to use '*poesis*' and '*eloquentia*' as synonyms, a broad vocabulary was brought to bear on the relationship between moral philosophy and eloquence. Perhaps connected to the fact that he did not produce a single treatise on rhetoric and elaborated his thought in a piecemeal fashion,⁶⁵ he used a number of different terms – few of which are fully defined in their immediate context – to signal the connection he sought to draw. In some respects, this is in itself revealing. While in the *Posteritati*, Petrarch specifically referred to '*moralem ... philosophiam*' and implicitly, if vaguely identifies this with '*sacris literis delectatus*', he was equally apt to refer to 'moral philosophy' as the counterpart of 'physical philosophy', or to '*theologia*', or merely to '*philosophia*'. On other occasions, terms such as '*philosophia*' and '*theologia*' are discounted in favour of a more direct engagement with the language of *virtus* and its implied contrast with *voluptas*, or with the vocabulary of *veritas*. On yet further occasions, a mixed lexicon is employed. Of course, in light of the preceding analysis of the *Secretum*, it is somewhat tempting to see this linguistic ambiguity as a reflection of a willingness deliberately to exploit what may have been perceived as a common semantic space shared by these terms. While it would be incautious to make such an assumption, however, and it is

⁶⁵ Vickers, 'The recovery of rhetoric', 420.

necessary to acknowledge the exact terminology used in each context, it is equally reasonable to posit that lexical variation was itself a part of Petrarch's exploration of the relationship between eloquence and moral philosophy and that the vocabulary deployed cloaks, rather than compromises, his consistency.

The first phase in the evolution of Petrarch's treatment of eloquence (1337 – late 1345) establishes a clear function for poetry, but partly as a consequence of his immediate literary objectives, it is connected rather vaguely with other fields of endeavour. In perhaps his first exploration of the theme in the *Africa*, Petrarch draws attention to the connection between poetry and a range of other disciplines, and, speaking specifically of poetic composition, indicates that the literary devices proper to that enterprise served to clothe the truths it took as its subject and shared with its analogues. Invited to speak by Scipio in the last book of the epic, Ennius moves from a mournful reflection on the condition of the eloquence of his day to an exploration of the nature and function of poetry. Rather than showing any concern for the approval of the crowd, he who is about to begin writing (*scripturum*) must first lay down '*firmissima veri | fundamenta*' on which may then be built more elaborate literary designs.⁶⁶ Ennius then clarifies that

All such things
as trials that history records, the ways
of virtue, lessons taught by life,
of Nature's secrets – all such matters are
a poet's substance, not to be exposed
as elsewhere, but to be disguised beneath
a covering cloak, or better, a light veil
which tricks the watcher's eye and now conceals
and now discloses underlying truth.⁶⁷

The same view is expressed in the Coronation Oration and, playing on a latent parallelism between Ennius and Petrarch, the connection was probably deliberate.⁶⁸ Although poetry is

⁶⁶ *Africa*, IX, 89-93: 'At nunc quod nostro poscis sermone doceri,
Accipe quam brevibus. Non illa licentia vatum est
Quam multis placuisse palam est.
Scripturum iecisse prius firmissima veri
Fundamenta decet...'

⁶⁷ *Africa*, IX, 97-101: '...quicquid labor historiarum est
Quicquid virtutum cultus documentaque vitae,
Nature studium quicquid licuisse poetis
Crede, sub ignoto tamen ut celentur amictu
Nuda alibi et tenui frustrentur lumina velo'

Translation from *Petrarch's Africa*, trans. T. G. Bergin and A. S. Wilson, (New Haven and London, 1977), 226.

⁶⁸ Kallendorf, *In Praise of Aeneas*, 27-8; W. Suerbaum, 'Poeta laureatus et triumphans: Die Dichterkrönung Petrarca und sein Ennius-Bild,' *Poetica* 5 (1972):293-328; idem, 'Ennius bei

distinguished by ‘*obliquis figurationibus*’, it nevertheless shares with other fields of endeavour an over-riding concern for the truth. Responding to the common belief that poetry deals only in fictions, Petrarch directly echoes Ennius’ words. ‘I could readily prove to you,’ he proclaimed,

that poets, under the veil of fictions, have set forth truths physical, moral and historical – thus bearing out a statement I often make, that the difference between a poet on the one hand and a historian or a moral or physical philosopher on the other is the same as the difference between a clouded sky and a clear sky, since in each case the same light exists in the object of vision, but is perceived in different degrees according to the capacity of the observers.⁶⁹

As Lactantius had observed, the poet’s task was to take real things and transform them using allegorical figures.⁷⁰

Perhaps because of his concentration on composition rather than reading, Petrarch is comparatively reticent when it comes to explaining exactly what value accrued to the use of ‘*obliquis figurationibus*’, but a sense of his estimation of the merit of poetry emerges from tantalising reflections on allegory, history and epideixis.⁷¹ In the *Africa*, Ennius’ literary relationship to Scipio is founded on the poet’s capacity to ‘proclaim the praise’ of famous men so that he might ‘sing their virtues’. The relationship between the celebration of virtue, the use of the allegorical devices appropriate to poetry and events in the lives of famous men which is latent within this remark merits observation. Together with his statement of the nature of poetry, it appears that Ennius uses allegory to transform real occurrences into a form which will manifest and exemplify virtue to the reader. In the prohemium of the *De viris illustribus*, which was probably composed at a similar time, Petrarch expressed this point more directly.⁷² Although his work necessarily took historical truths for its subject matter, his use of that material was determined by a desire to reveal to his reader the virtues

Petrarca. Betrachtungen zu literarischen Ennius-Blidern,’ in *Ennius*, Entretiens sur l’Antiquité Classique 17, (Geneva-Vandoeuven, 1972), 293-347; L. B. T. Houghton, ‘A Letter from Petrarch,’ in W. Fitzgerald and E. Gowers, eds., *Ennius Perennis: The Annals and Beyond*, PCPS supplement no. 31, (Cambridge, 2007), 145-58.

⁶⁹ Translation from E. H. Wilkins, ‘Petrarch’s Coronation Oration,’ *PMLA* 68/5 (Dec. 1953): 1241-50, here 1246. The Latin text for the Coronation Oration can be found in C. Godi, ‘La “collation laureationis” del Petrarca,’ *Italia Medioevale e Umanistica* 13 (1970): 1-27. For a brief discussion of the parallelism of the Coronation Oration and *Africa*, IX, see Bernardo, *Petrarch, Scipio and the Africa*, 6-12.

⁷⁰ Wilkins, ‘Petrarch’s Coronation Oration,’ 1246.

⁷¹ *ibid.*

⁷² See B. G. Kohl, ‘Petrarch’s Prefaces to *De viris illustribus*,’ *History and Theory* 13/2 (May 1974): 132-44. On the composition of the *De viris illustribus*, and of the prohemium in particular, see, for example, G. Martellotti, ‘Il *De viris illustribus*. Modi e tempi della composizione,’ in *De viris illustribus*, ed. G. Martellotti, Edizione Nazionale delle Opere di Francesco Petrarca, vol. II, (Florence, 1922), ix-xiv; idem, ‘La Prefazione A,’ in *ibid.*, cxxx-cxxxi.

to be followed and the vices to be avoided.⁷³ Poetry, which was in some ways defined by ‘*obliquis figurationibus*’, sought to communicate virtue by allegorising the deeds of famous men, or – we may presume – any other suitable subject connected with truth.

The issues first tentatively and generally touched upon in the *Africa*, the Coronation Oration and the *De viris illustribus* were addressed with more clarity during the second phase of Petrarch’s thought (1347-c.1351). The broad brushstrokes with which he painted the relationship between poetry and other fields of endeavour were replaced with a more refined and precise manner. Whereas Petrarch had previously described poetry as a mode of writing which could be brought to bear on the truths revealed by a multiplicity of disciplines for the inferred purpose of communicating virtue, he began to adopt a more specific approach, presenting *poesis* more clearly as a *τέχνη* which could express philosophical and theological truths in a manner appropriate to stimulating virtue in the reader. In pursuit of this, virtue itself is identified more explicitly as a Christian quality, bound up with the love of God.

A particularly illustrative example of the greater precision and more explicitly Christian concern with which Petrarch treated problems connected with eloquence is provided by a letter written to his brother Gherardo on 2nd December 1348. Intended as an introduction to and commentary on his first eclogue, this letter was designed to address the relationship between ‘*theologia*’ and ‘*poesis*’. Framed by a comparison between Petrarch’s enthusiasm for classical verse and his brother’s monastic calling, it not merely casts light on his understanding of poetry’s function, but also offers an insight into poetry’s capacity to express theological truths through literary modes.

Extending some of the ideas explored in the *Africa* and the Coronation Oration, Petrarch suggests that, far from being in tension with theology, poetry is most properly a *τέχνη* used to express theological truths and praise pleasing to God. The language and allegorical devices intrinsic to poetry were themselves instituted for the pursuit of theological ends and the history of humanity’s longing for the divine illustrates that poetic modes were an intrinsic part of worship from the earliest days.

At the beginning of the letter, Petrarch recognises that on first inspection, Gherardo might not appreciate the eclogue he had received since he would be inclined to view it as discordant with his calling.⁷⁴ But Petrarch warned his brother not to judge hastily. Contrary to what Gherardo might think, poetry is not in fact opposed to theology.⁷⁵ Both come from God, and, by way of introduction, Petrarch points out that Christ himself spoke as a lion, as a

⁷³ *De viris illustribus*, prohem., 6.

⁷⁴ *Fam.* X, 4, 1.

⁷⁵ *ibid.*

lamb and as a worm, and Scripture is riddled with allegorical language. What is this, he asks, if not poetry?⁷⁶ All people desire a knowledge of the divine, and hence Aristotle was able to say that the first theologians were poets.⁷⁷ This, Petrarch claims, is evident in the name ‘poet’ itself. There are many different interpretations of the origins of the term, but the etymology which he finds most probable reflects the close connection between speech and praise. In the distant past, Petrarch argues, men were crude and uncivilised, but they were nevertheless filled with a desire for truth, for a knowledge, and for an understanding of the correct means of worship.⁷⁸ As a consequence, they constructed buildings for meditation, which they called temples, established sacred ministers, whom they called priests, and made magnificent statues, golden vases, marble tables and purple mantles. So that these marks of honour should not be mute, it was seen that high-sounding words also pleased the divinity, that holy blandishments – far from the common way of speaking – would carry to the highest reaches, and that a certain rhythm would dispel weariness.⁷⁹ These words were not of a vulgar form, but crafted out of a new, artful and exquisite variety. Since the Greek word ‘*poetes*’ (presumably meaning ‘*ποιητής*’) denotes both one who makes things and a writer, those who used this new form of words to honour the divine were called ‘poets’.⁸⁰ This, Petrarch contends, is borne out by Suetonius, Marcus Varro and Isidore of Seville, and is also reflected in the words of Moses, David, Solomon, Jeremiah and Job.⁸¹ Gherardo was also invited to consider the fact that Ambrose, Augustine and Jerome all made use of poetry and rhythm, while the writings of other holy men – such as Prudentius, Prosper and Sedulius – were known only through their ‘*metrica...opuscula*’.⁸² He should not, therefore, regard with horror those things which he knew pleased men both holy and beloved of Christ. Gherardo should, Petrarch believed, concentrate on the meaning of particular works and, if they were true and wholesome, should embrace them regardless of the style.⁸³ Although Petrarch was careful not to go so far as to say that poetry was to be preferred over all else, he nevertheless felt that it was unnecessary to spurn it simply because it was in verse: to reject poetry without considering that its style cloaked its meaning was similar to the madness or

⁷⁶ *Fam.* X, 4, 1-2.

⁷⁷ *Fam.* X, 4, 2, referring to Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 983 b 27.

⁷⁸ *Fam.* X, 4, 3. For a discussion of this point in the context of the idea of the *poeta theologus*, see Witt, ‘Coluccio Salutati and the Conception of the *Poeta Theologus*,’ 542-3.

⁷⁹ *Fam.* X, 4, 4.

⁸⁰ *ibid.*: ‘Id sane non vulgari forma sed artificiosa quadam et exquisita et nova fieri oportuit, quoniam greco sermone ‘*poetes*’ dicta est, eos quoque qui hac utebantur, *poetas* dixerunt.’

⁸¹ *Fam.* X, 4, 5-6, referring to Isidore, *Etym.*, 8, 7, 1-3.

⁸² *Fam.* X, 4, 8.

⁸³ *ibid.*

hypocrisy of praising food that was served in an earthenware vessel while being revolted by the same dish presented on a golden platter.⁸⁴

This serves as the basis for the following explanation of the first eclogue. Here, Petrarch is primarily concerned to offer a reading of the bucolic verse which stresses the parallelism of his own enthusiasm for classical verse (represented by Homer and Virgil) and Gherardo's religious vocation.⁸⁵ In not following a religious life, Petrarch may have followed a more difficult path, but that is not to say that he was unable to access the truths of religion. Through his reading of verse, he was able to attain an understanding of virtue: contrary to expectations, the allegorical and historical modes of classical poetry allowed it to be read as a reflection of a specifically Christian virtue, and permitted Petrarch to draw valuable moral lessons from its stream.

Having pointed out that he is represented by Silvius and Gherardo by Monicus,⁸⁶ Petrarch makes it clear that the fact that the two shared a single mother is not an allegory, but the simple truth, just as they shared the same father.⁸⁷ While his brother was shut away in safety, far away from cities and men, however, Petrarch himself wandered uncertain and in error.⁸⁸ Accused by Monicus of seeking the inaccessible mountain peak which stands for the rare fame which few achieved, Silvius is delighted by the babbling spring which represents literature and eloquent men, and roams through deserted places which stand for his studies, but which have been deserted by others either because they were abandoned out of a desire for profit or because they were felt to be hopeless as the result of a sluggishness of talent.⁸⁹ From these springs arise the streams of the various disciplines which run with a certain enchanting sound. The delicate sound which Silvius applauds is the chorus of studies, and the nymphs of the spring are the natural goddesses of human study.⁹⁰ Although Monicus invites him to cross his threshold, Silvius cannot do so: so, just as Gherardo enticed him to enter the Carthusian monastery at Montrieux, Petrarch indicates that he could not.⁹¹

The distinction between the two is important for their relative appreciation of poetry. As Petrarch explains, Monicus attempted to entice Silvius to enter his cavern in the eclogue by claiming that there he will hear a sweeter song than that sung by the two shepherds whose

⁸⁴ *Fam.* X, 4, 9.

⁸⁵ See, for example, J. Robbins, *Prodigal Son/Elder Brother: Interpretation and Alterity in Augustine, Petrarch, Kafka, Levinas*, (Chicago, 1991), 59-60; R. J. Lokaj, *Petrarch, Ascent of Mount Ventoux: The Familiaris IV, 1, New Commented Edition*, *Scriptores Latini* 23 (Rome, 2006).

⁸⁶ *Fam.* X, 4, 20.

⁸⁷ *Fam.* X, 4, 22.

⁸⁸ *ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Fam.* X, 4, 23.

⁹⁰ *Fam.* X, 4, 28.

⁹¹ *ibid.*

charms have captivated him.⁹² Rather than revealing the name of the shepherd who sings so sweetly, Monicus describes his fatherland, mentioning first two rivers with a single source in error, and then one river with two sources, both located in Asia.⁹³ Recognising the single river from the description, Silvius demonstrates his knowledge by calling to mind the fact that it was in that river that a certain shaggy shepherd bathed Apollo.⁹⁴ Monicus responds by saying that it was there that his shepherd was born and, as Petrarch reiterates, the two figures then heap praise on their respective shepherds.⁹⁵

The shepherds whom Silvius admires, Petrarch explains, are Virgil and Homer, while the shepherd whose song Monicus prefers is David, author of the psalms. Although Monicus' first reference to the two rivers springing from a single source denotes the Tigris and the Eurphrates, his second – correct – reference to the one river coming from two sources is the Jordan, in Judea, which is fed by the Jor and the Dan.⁹⁶ It was in this river, Petrarch reminds Gherardo, that Christ was baptised by John the Baptist, and this fact is reflected in the allegorical words of the eclogue. The shaggy boy of the eclogue stands for John, while Petrarch used Apollo to symbolise Christ, 'true God and true son of God'.⁹⁷ The choice of Apollo as a symbol for Christ is significant in that it allows Petrarch to connect poetry written after classical modes with the central precepts of Christianity, in defiance of his brother's views. Petrarch carefully underscores this point by explaining that he described Apollo – the god of poetry – as the 'god of the intellect and wisdom, since, as noted in the works of the theologians, the wisdom attributed to the collective and individual persons of the Trinity is attributed to the Son and is the same wisdom as that of the Father'.⁹⁸ The Jordan was thus not merely indicative of David's fatherland, but also denoted the river in which Christ was baptised, and, by implication, the river in which poetry was allegorically bathed in the waters of Christianity. In David's harsh-sounding words is revealed the use of history and allegory, but – despite Monicus' defence of the language of Scripture⁹⁹ – the same devices are employed in classical verse, which points to the same truths, and which Petrarch prefers.¹⁰⁰ The deeds of Scipio Africanus are highlighted in this regard, and tales of the Roman general are held up as evidencing a divinely instituted virtue. This young man, Petrarch points out, is called heavenly whether because of the heroic virtue which flourished

⁹² *Fam.* X, 4, 16.

⁹³ *Fam.* X, 4, 17.

⁹⁴ *Fam.* X, 4, 18.

⁹⁵ *ibid.*

⁹⁶ *Fam.* X, 4, 29.

⁹⁷ *Fam.* X, 4, 30.

⁹⁸ *ibid.*

⁹⁹ *Fam.* X, 4, 32.

¹⁰⁰ q.v. Bernardo, *Petrarch, Laura and the Triumphs*, 81-2.

greatly – the virtue which was called blazing by Virgil, fiery by Lucan – in him, or because of the view that he had heavenly origins, which caused the Romans to admire him greatly.¹⁰¹ Despite their paganism – which seems to be recognised implicitly – classical poets and figures from the ancient past could, Petrarch suggests, nevertheless prefigure Christian virtues and this assumption lay behind his own composition of the *Africa*.¹⁰² Indeed, although he never says so explicitly, it might also be suggested that in making this case, Petrarch offers an allegorical reading of his first eclogue which itself indicates that a deep attachment to Christian virtue could be expressed by a verse composed under the influence of classical poetry. Regardless of Gherardo's initial prejudices, the technical devices appropriate to poetry found in the eclogue cloak a defence of theological truth.

In attempting to defend his enthusiasm for poetry and in highlighting the compatibility of *theologia* and *poesis*, Petrarch's letter to Gherardo suggests that allegory allowed verse to be read in a manner which allowed theological truths to be accessed and an understanding of virtue acquired. The idea that eloquence was a *τέχνη* which could be used to give expression to Christian truths for the moral benefit of the reader was explored further in a letter written to Tommaso da Messina on 1st May 1350/1. Conceived as part of a short and thematically-linked epistolary series, the letter is an attempt to establish the importance of the study of eloquence. Adopting a different approach to that he employed in writing to Gherardo, Petrarch avoids discussing how he himself had derived benefit from eloquent works, and defends erudite language from the perspective of inculcating virtue in others. Unlike *Fam.* X, 4, there is little reference to allegory, and Petrarch instead treats eloquence as the art of language itself, considered largely in contrast to action. There is a specifically Christian flavour to his conclusion and, just as in his earlier epistle, he suggest that eloquence is erected on the basis of a proper understanding of moral philosophy and has as its purpose the stimulation of a love of God in other people. Having established that his enthusiasm for classical verse had allowed him to access Christian truths despite wandering in error in the world in his letter to Gherardo, Petrarch goes on to indicate that the orator's personal apprehension of virtue was the necessary predicate of his ability to use eloquent language to urge putative readers to derive the same benefits.

Quoting from Virgil in the first sentence, Petrarch notes that if one wishes to 'rise from the earth and fly on the lips of men', it is necessary to foster both the philosopher's concern for the soul and the orator's erudition of language.¹⁰³ Just as eloquence must be

¹⁰¹ *Fam.* X, 4, 33.

¹⁰² *Fam.* X, 4, 34.

¹⁰³ *Fam.* I, 9, 1: 'Animi cura philosophum querit, eruditio lingue oratoris est propria; neutra nobis negligenda, si nos, ut aiunt, humo tollere et per ora virum volitare propositum est.' quoting Virgil,

studied when the mind has been cultivated, Petrarch explains that there can be no value in speech unless the mind has a certain dignity.¹⁰⁴ The importance of this point, however, lies in the reasons for which the condition of the mind should be nurtured and for which the powers of speech should be developed. The connection between the two hinges on the relationship between the self and others. 'For if [the study of eloquence] were unnecessary for us,' Petrarch claimed,

and the mind, relying on its own strength and unravelling its benefits in silence, did not require the support of words, labour would nevertheless be necessary for the rest of those with whom we live.¹⁰⁵

If, in other words, a man such as Tommaso were able to nurture virtue in his own mind without the need for external assistance, he would still need to develop the skills of the orator so that others may benefit. The capacity of eloquence to move others to virtue appears to be motivated by and predicated upon the orator's personal apprehension of virtue.

Just as eloquent composition seems directed at instilling virtue, so the reading of an eloquently written text is presented as an activity which allows for the recovery of a potentially fruitful understanding of the good. Tommaso, of course, could object that actions proverbially speak louder than words and that, provided with '*nostre virtutis exempla*', people may be seized by the desire to imitate.¹⁰⁶ Although he does not deny this, however, Petrarch indicates that eloquence nevertheless offers great assistance. There are many men who, though unaffected by the writings of the past, may suddenly be awoken to the delights of virtue by the words of others.¹⁰⁷ For this reason, the pursuit of eloquence has an unendingly important role: thousands of years may pass by and still '*ad amorem Dei, ad odium voluptatum precepta*' will never suffice.¹⁰⁸ The language here is significant. Prefiguring the rhetorical theory of the later Renaissance, Petrarch defines the function of eloquence in terms of a desire to pursue virtue (*virtus*) and avoid vice (*voluptas*), each

Georg. III, 9. Note that, in addition to adapting the word order, Petrarch omits Virgil's '*victorque*', which perhaps lends the allusion the greater sense of humility appropriate to the '*animi cura*'.

¹⁰⁴ *Fam.* I, 9, 2.

¹⁰⁵ *Fam.* I, 9, 4: 'Que si nobis necessaria non foret et mens, suis viribus nisa bonaque sua in silentio explicans, verborum suffragiis non egeret, ad ceterorum saltem utilitatem, quibuscum vivimus, laborandum erat...'

¹⁰⁶ *Fam.* I, 9, 5: 'Instabis autem et dices: "Heu quantum et nobis tutius et illis efficacius fuerat suadere, ut eorum oculis nostre virtutis exempla preberemus, quorum illi pulchritudine delectati ad imitationis impetum raperentur! Natura enim hoc habet, ut multo melius multoque facilius factorum quam verborum stimulis excitemur perque hanc viam expeditius ad omnem virtutis altitudinem consurgamus.'

¹⁰⁷ *Fam.* I, 9, 6.

¹⁰⁸ *Fam.* I, 9, 9: 'Decem adhuc redeant annorum milia, secula seculis aggregentur: nunquam satis laudabitur virtus; nunquam ad amorem Dei, ad odium voluptatum precepta sufficiunt; nunquam acutis ingeniis iter obstruetur ad novarum rerum indaginem.'

conceived of in relation to the love of God. As a manner of speaking or writing in a manner appropriate to a given audience, eloquence appears as a means of expressing to others the results of Petrarch's private search for the truths of moral philosophy.

The impression that eloquence proceeds from a personal understanding of virtue, and is reliant on the pursuit of moral philosophy is the key feature of the third phase in the development of Petrarch's rhetorical theory (c.1353-c.1366) and is made explicit in the *De remediis utriusque fortune*, begun only a few years after the composition of the letter to Tommaso da Messina. As in *Fam.* I, 9, Petrarch sustains the inference that the man who would be eloquent must cultivate both the philosopher's care for the soul and the orator's erudition. Developing the implications of the *Africa* and the Coronation Oration, however, it is suggested that elegant language must necessarily be erected on a solid apprehension of virtue, and in this the character and learning of the orator play an important role.

Some years earlier, Petrarch had cautioned against engaging in public oratory without first having taken care of the condition of one's soul in the *De vita solitaria*. In its immediate context, this warning was intended to amplify the importance of cultivating virtue through solitude, but – alongside *Fam.* I, 9 – it also represents an early expression of the connection between eloquence and a personal apprehension of the good. There are, Petrarch says, 'learned and eloquent men' who go about cities delivering speeches about virtue and vice, and apparently excoriating the life of the *occupatus*.¹⁰⁹ Although what they say may indeed be useful, they do not practice what they preach.¹¹⁰ 'The doctor who helps the sick man with his advice, however, is not always healthy,' Petrarch contends, 'and he has often died of the same malady from which he had freed many others.'¹¹¹ While he certainly would not disdain carefully considered and artfully composed words designed for the benefit of the many, Petrarch believed that 'this is not a school of rhetoric, but of life.' Men should focus not on the 'empty glory of language, but on a genuine peace of mind.'¹¹² This serves as the prelude to a recommendation of a solitary life, but it also indicates the impossibility of separating eloquence and moral character. Regardless of how beneficial it might be for the listener, an oration delivered by a man who does not care for the condition of his own soul is

¹⁰⁹ *De vita solitaria*, Z I, iii, 2; P I, iii: 'Multi sunt qui occupationes in comune utile et solitudine qualibet santiores profitentur. ... Non inficior doctos quosdam et facundos viros, et qui multa subtiliter adversus hec dispuent. Ceterum non de ingenio, sed de moribus est questio; ambiunt civitates, declamant in populis, multa de vitiis, multa de virtutibus loquuntur...' *Prose*, 322-4.

¹¹⁰ *De vita solitaria*, Z I, iii, 2; P I, iii; *Prose*, 324.

¹¹¹ *De vita solitaria*, Z I, iii, 2; P I, iii: 'Sed non statim sanus est medicus, qui consilio egrum iuvat, quin eodem sepe morbo, quo multos liberaverat, interiit.' *Prose*, 324.

¹¹² *De vita solitaria*, Z I, iii, 2; P I, iii: 'Verba studio elaborata atque arte composita pro multorum salute non respuo et, quicunque sit opifex, utile opus amplector; verum hec nobis non rethorice scola sed vite est, nec inanem lingue gloriam, sed solidam quietem mentis intendimus.' *Prose*, 324.

the product of a desire for the 'empty glory of language'. By implication, Petrarch would prefer that an eloquent speech urge an audience to love virtue and spurn vice not merely by using artful forms of words, but also by reflecting the moral character of the orator himself.

This passage from the *De vita solitaria* speaks to a distinction between loquacity and eloquence, and it is precisely this topic to which Petrarch's interlocutors – Gaudium and Ratio – turn in *De remediis*, I, 9. Despite Gaudium's predictable enthusiasm, Ratio warns that eloquence has two sides. It is important, he counsels, to know how to use it.¹¹³ Ineptly used, eloquence can be like a furiously flashing sword which is better sheathed and not used at all.¹¹⁴ If the '*fulgor eloquentie*' is to be glorious, however, it is necessary to temper it with holiness and wisdom.¹¹⁵ Although the reasons for this are only gradually revealed, it serves as the starting point for fuller reflection on the moral foundations of rhetoric. Responding to Gaudium's claim that eloquence alone is sufficient, Ratio asserts that where it is pursued to the exclusion of all else, especially wisdom, it is not eloquence, but loquacity.¹¹⁶ 'For it is impossible to be a true orator,' he claims, 'that is to say, a master of eloquence, unless one is a good man.'¹¹⁷ This, indeed, was a view that both Cato and Cicero appear to have endorsed.¹¹⁸ Without virtue and wisdom, it is not possible in giving praise to distinguish between the good and the bad, and hence impossible to exhort others to forsake vice.¹¹⁹ Unless supported by an apprehension of virtue, the sweet and ornate nature of eloquence speech is neither compelling nor sincere, but more like a whore's deceit or honeyed poison.¹²⁰ Hence, if anyone aspires to the title of 'orator' and to the true praise of eloquence, Ratio advises that it is first necessary for him to study virtue and wisdom.¹²¹ With the benefit of virtue and wisdom, the good man will be able to discriminate between the vices which are to be excoriated and the virtues which are to be praised, and know clearly how to deploy the literary devices appropriate to his eloquence. Provided that the orator is indeed a *vir bonus*, there is no sense in which literary style should conflict with the demands of moral philosophy.

¹¹³ *De remediis utriusque fortune*, I, 9.

¹¹⁴ *ibid.*

¹¹⁵ *ibid.*: 'Et lugubres comete et infesti gladii et hostiles galee fulgent. Ut fulgor eloquentie gloriosus sit, sanctitate et sapientia temperetur'.

¹¹⁶ *ibid.*

¹¹⁷ *ibid.*: 'Verus enim orator, hoc est eloquentie magister, nisi vir bonus esse non potest.'

¹¹⁸ *ibid.*

¹¹⁹ *ibid.*

¹²⁰ *ibid.*

¹²¹ *ibid.*

3. Lady Philosophy's Muses and the *Invective contra medicum*

In the most mature expression of his views, we have observed that Petrarch saw eloquence as a *τέχνη*, a mode of communication which could be deployed to express truth so that others might come to love the good. Making use of figurative devices and especially allegory, its function was to persuade the reader, but was at the same time closely related to the virtue of the orator himself. While a man could be eloquent, but not good, the moral quality of a virtuous man informed his rhetoric and contributed to his capacity for persuasion more powerfully than the inculcation of any rules. Far from being in tension with philosophy, eloquence took the truths revealed through moral philosophy as its subject matter and, mediated by the personal understanding of the orator, conveyed them in an appropriate form.

This interpretation of Petrarch's understanding of the relationship between eloquence and moral philosophy stands in stark contrast to the readings offered by Trinkaus and Seigel. Rather than being troubled by the possibility of an inconsistency arising from an underlying opposition, as Seigel has argued, Petrarch's presentation of eloquence as a *τέχνη* and attachment to a clear sense of truth underpinning philosophy allowed a harmonious association to be depicted. By the same token, as a *τέχνη* associated with specific literary devices deployed in a fashion appropriate to the subject, it is difficult to support the suggestion that eloquence was more exalted than philosophy.

The *Invective contra medicum* addresses many of the themes central to an understanding of the relationship between eloquence and philosophy, and, having been revised in 1355, dates from the final stage in the evolution of Petrarch's rhetorical thought. Enraged by Petrarch's advice to the pontiff, the anonymous papal physician had not merely attacked Petrarch for claiming to be a poet,¹²² but had also asserted that rhetoric should be the handmaiden of medicine,¹²³ whose practitioners offered 'the fruits of good health' and were able to cure the body and the soul.¹²⁴ Apparently presenting himself as a philosopher,¹²⁵ the doctor had argued that since it revelled in obscurity¹²⁶ and falsehood,¹²⁷ poetry should be denounced,¹²⁸ and insinuatingly suggested a host of reasons why Petrarch might have offered

¹²² *Invective contra medicum*, III, 142; Marsh, 118.

¹²³ *Invective contra medicum*, I, 14; Marsh, 12.

¹²⁴ *Invective contra medicum*, I, 2: '... sanitatis fructum pollicitus...' Marsh, 2; *Invective contra medicum*, II, 53: 'Se his artibus armatum, non tantum corporis sed animi vitia curaturum.' Marsh, 40.

¹²⁵ *Invective contra medicum*, II, 521 Marsh, 40.

¹²⁶ *Invective contra medicum*, III, 130; Marsh, 106.

¹²⁷ *Invective contra medicum*, I, 36; Marsh, 28.

¹²⁸ *Invective contra medicum*, III, 105-6; Marsh, 84; see also the reference to Boethius, *Cons.* I, pr., 1 at *Invective contra medicum*, III, 118-9; Marsh, 94-6.

advice to the pope.¹²⁹ In responding to these charges, Petrarch offered both a scathing invective against the doctor and his profession,¹³⁰ and a staunch defence of poetry. As we have already noted, Trinkaus has argued that Petrarch upheld the view that medicine should be subordinated to rhetoric. Attacking the doctor for his love of dialectic, Trinkaus suggests that Petrarch substituted 'poetry as the true medium for philosophy and theology rather than the syllogistic demonstrations of dialectic used by the scholastics.'¹³¹ Contrasting eloquence with the pedantry of the schoolmen, Trinkaus views the *Invective contra medicum* as evidence to support the contention that 'Petrarch ... proposed that poetic theology and rhetoric, rather than philosophy, were the intellectual instruments and disciplines best fitted for the Christian goal of salvation and the cure of souls.'¹³² That such a view challenges the apparently harmonious relationship between eloquence and philosophy previously observed need not be stressed: in Trinkaus' interpretation, the notion of eloquence as a *τέχνη* is subsumed by the perceived supremacy of rhetoric over philosophy.

There is, in part, much to recommend Trinkaus' reading of the *Invective contra medicum*, despite its apparent divergence from some of the evidence already examined. Responding to the doctor's charges, Petrarch consistently placed his concern for the cure of souls at the centre of consideration. Although Petrarch might have disagreed with him on many other points, they were apparently of one mind in regarding the salvation of souls as being of considerable importance in determining the role of eloquence. For the doctor, body and soul were intimately related and hence could be healed together by a medical practitioner. Health in all its senses was a practical matter of 'things' which, it seems, were held to have little to do with the fictions and fluctuations of poetry.¹³³ Medicine was, as a result, superior to rhetoric. For Petrarch, however, eloquence was intended specifically for the cure of souls, while medicine concerned itself only with the body, and even then often ineffectually. Just as reason allows the rational soul to command the body, the arts invented for the sake of the soul command those invented for the body's sake.¹³⁴ As Trinkaus has argued, medicine was hence inferior to eloquence, since rhetoric alone addressed the health of the soul. Indeed, expressing the same point in a slightly different fashion, Petrarch

¹²⁹ e.g. *Invective contra medicum*, I, 6, 7.

¹³⁰ On Petrarch's attitude towards medicine in the *Invective contra medicum*, see G. Dell'Anna, 'Il Petrarca e la medicina,' in L. Rotondi Secchi Tarugi, ed., *Petrarca e la cultura europea*, (Milan, 1997), 203-22; F. Bausi, 'Il «*mechanicus*» che scrive libri. Per un nuovo commento alle «*Invective contra medicum*» di Francesco Petrarca,' *Rinascimento* 42 (2002): 110-11; N. Streuver, 'Petrarch's *Invective Contra Medicum*: An Early Confrontation of Rhetoric and Medicine,' *MLN* 108/4 (Sept. 1992): 659-79.

¹³¹ Trinkaus, *The Poet as Philosopher*, 96.

¹³² *ibid.*, 90.

¹³³ *Invective contra medicum*, III, 113-15.

¹³⁴ *Invective contra medicum*, III, 160; Marsh, 134.

claimed that rhetoric had as its ultimate purpose the education of men in living well and, as a result, was entirely happy for his works to be described as homilies.¹³⁵

Trinkaus is similarly correct to suggest that Petrarch regarded poetry as the 'true medium for philosophy and theology'. This is not, however, to say that poetry supplanted philosophy. Contrary to Trinkaus' assertion, Petrarch's definition of eloquence as a *τέχνη* allowed him to describe eloquence as a mode of expression applied to the truths of philosophy while also castigating the doctor's use of dialectic for its predisposition to unchristian error.

For Petrarch, the cure of souls through eloquence was possible only where rhetoric was related to an understanding of the truth. Rather than being a source of philosophical truth in itself, Petrarch argued that rhetoric was simply a means of approaching or expressing truth: it was, in other words, a means and not an end. In this respect, it was similar to a number of other fields of endeavour, a fact which the doctor appears to have missed. Eloquence, dialectic and grammar are alike, Petrarch claimed, in that 'they are a path, rather than a goal.'¹³⁶ None of these disciplines should be thought of as containing, or being equivalent to philosophy. They are each routes to philosophy. If any one is pursued as an end in itself, confusion and error follow. So, in the doctor's case, in clinging to syllogisms so resolutely, he has failed to distinguish between true and false philosophy, and has been led to deny Christ by placing doctrines alongside one another indiscriminately.¹³⁷

Philosophy, Petrarch claimed, is a tree with many branches and so there are also many types of philosopher. There are true philosophers and false philosophers.¹³⁸ Some, like Epicurus and the Epicureans, are called philosophers, but are justly regarded as being tainted with infamy.¹³⁹ Others, like Jerome, Augustine and the Doctors of the Church, are true philosophers since 'there never was, and never could be any philosophy higher than the one leading to the truth' and in this regard, 'our own Christian philosophers prominently surpassed the vigils and labours of all others'.¹⁴⁰ As Petrarch's language and examples

¹³⁵ *Invective contra medicum*, III, 146; Marsh, 122, quoting Isidore, *Etym.*, 6.8.2. On the homily in medieval rhetoric, see H. Caplan, 'Classical Rhetoric and the Mediaeval Theory of Preaching,' *Classical Philology* 28/2 (April 1933): 73-96, here 87.

¹³⁶ *Invective contra medicum*, II, 83: 'Sed, o stulte, non hac careo: verum scio quid ei, quid ceteris liberalibus artibus dandum sit; didici a philosophis nullam earum valde suspicere. Equidem, ut eas didicisse laudabile, sic in eisdem senescere puerile est. Via sunt nempe, non terminus, nisi errantibus ac vagis quibus nullus est vite portus.' Marsh, 64-6.

¹³⁷ *Invective contra medicum*, II, 83-4; Marsh, 66; *Invective contra medicum*, II, 87; Marsh, 70.

¹³⁸ *Invective contra medicum*, III, 122; Marsh, 98.

¹³⁹ *Invective contra medicum*, III, 121; Marsh, 98.

¹⁴⁰ *Invective contra medicum*, III, 121: 'Unde Paulus apostolus, verus Cristi philosophus, et post eum clarissimus eius interpres Augustinus, multique quos enumerare non est necesse, philosophiam laudatam ab aliis execrantur; cum tamen nulla unquam philosophia altior fuerit, aut esse possit, quam

suggest, the true philosophy is unmistakably Christian and is bound up with the love of God. Sharpening his criticism of the doctor, Petrarch reminds him that Augustine, echoing Plato, had argued that ‘if wisdom is God, who created all things, as divine authority and truth have shown, then the true philosopher is one who loves God.’¹⁴¹ The implications of this evoke the moral message of the *Secretum*. In order to love God, Petrarch indicates that the true philosopher must first reflect on his own mortality and spurn the physical world for the blessedness of the next life:

Now to meditate about death, to arm oneself against it, to prepare oneself to disdain and accept it, to meet it when necessary, and to exchange with sublime resolve this brief and wretched life for eternal life, for blessedness, and for glory – all these things are true philosophy, which has been simply described as the contemplation of death. Even though this definition was invented by pagans, it belongs to Christians. For they should despise the present life, and in their hope for eternal life, they should desire its dissolution.¹⁴²

Although rhetoric cannot be regarded as equivalent to philosophy any more than dialectic, eloquence may nevertheless be seen as philosophy’s handmaiden. Despite the doctor’s misinterpretation of the passage, Petrarch contends that this is evidenced by Boethius’ *De consolatio philosophiae*. Appearing before Boethius’ literary *alter ego*, Lady Philosophy recommends ‘her’ Muses. There is no doubt in Petrarch’s mind that these Muses belong to the poets, and that – as the possessive pronoun indicates – they serve the cause of philosophy, that is to say, the true philosophy.¹⁴³ Boethius’ attack on the ‘harlots of the stage’ refers not to *all* poets (as the doctor appears to have believed), but merely to the ‘so-called dramatic poets’ whom practitioners of the poetic art revile with good reason.¹⁴⁴

que ducit ad verum, qua nostri, celesti munere potius quam humano studio, ante omnium philosophorum vigilias ac labores eminentissime floruerunt.’ Marsh, 98; trans. Marsh, 99.

¹⁴¹ *Invective contra medicum*, II, 96: “Porro enim,” ut Platonem sequens ait Augustinus, “si sapientia Deus est per quem facta sunt omnia, sicut divina autoritas veritasque monstravit, verus philosophus est amator Dei.” quoting Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, VIII, I; Marsh, 76-8; trans. Marsh, 77-9.

¹⁴² *Invective contra medicum*, II, 88: ‘Illam certe premeditari, contra illam armari, ad illius contemptum ac patientiam componi, illi si res exigat occurrere, et pro eterna vita, pro felicitate, pro gloria brevem hanc miseramque vitam alto animo pacisci, ea demum vera philosophia est, quam quidam nichil aliud nisi cogitationem mortis esse dixerunt. Que philosophie descriptio, quamvis a paganis inventa, Cristianorum tamen est propria, quibus et huius vite contemptus et spes eterne et dissolutionis desiderium esse debet.’ quoting Cicero, *Tusc.* I, xxx, 74 and referring to Hugh of St. Victor, *Didascalion*, 2.1; Marsh, 70; trans. Marsh, 71.

¹⁴³ *Invective contra medicum*, III, 118-9; Marsh, 94-6, referring to Boethius, *Cons.* I, pr., 1.

¹⁴⁴ *Invective contra medicum*, III, 124: ‘Sed ut, omissis aliis, ceptum sequar, in ultimo agmine poetarum quidam sunt quos scenicos vocant, ad quos pertinet illud Boetii, et quicquid a quolibet contra poetas vere dicitur; et hi quidem ipsos inter poetas contemnuntur, qui quales essent Plato ipse declaravit in sua *Republica*, quando eos censuit urbe pellendos. Ut enim constet non de omnibus eum sensisse, sed de scenicis tantum, ipsius Platonis ratio audienda est ab Augustino posita...’ Marsh, 100, referring to Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, II, xiv, which cites Plato, *Republic*, III, 3981, X, 607b.

Evoking the sentiments of *Fam.* X, 4, Petrarch argues that neither Homer nor Virgil dedicated themselves to stage plays, but instead attempted to explain the “nature of people and the world, the virtues, and human perfection.”¹⁴⁵ Although it is possible to find fault with some poetry, Homer and Virgil were concerned to communicate the truths of philosophy, and thus could not be criticised using the doctor’s erroneous reading of Lady Philosophy’s words in the *De consolatio philosophiae*. These truths are derived from God, yet He also grants to some the gift of poetic expression.¹⁴⁶ So, while the poets of Antiquity may have been pagans, they were nevertheless also the unconscious recipients of this divine favour and their works – as Petrarch had argued to Gherardo in explaining his first eclogue – contain elements of the truth expressed in an appropriate form.¹⁴⁷

Although poetry takes the truths of moral philosophy for its subject, it is – as Petrarch had previously suggested – nevertheless a *τέχνη* which aims at persuasion (*πειθώ*), and these characteristics are essential in understanding its capacity to mediate moral truths. Rather than recommending the view that Petrarch saw eloquence as superior to philosophy, this emphasis on figurative language only serves to highlight the manner in which poetry was able to work in harmony with philosophy, and contribute to the salvation of souls. Quoting Cicero, Petrarch reminded the doctor that ‘the function of the rhetorical art is to speak aptly with a view to persuading, and its end is to persuade by one’s speech.’¹⁴⁸ Using Lactantius as an authority in the same manner as in the Coronation Oration, he further suggests that ‘the poet’s function consists in translating actual truths into different forms using indirect and figural language with a certain decorum.’¹⁴⁹ This use of figural language, however, may lead the critic to suggest that obscurity renders it unable to communicate such truths effectively, and the doctor was apparently not slow to make such an accusation.

Far from obscuring truth, Petrarch indicates that the technical aspects of poetry render it more powerful. In seeking to convey the precepts of true philosophy, poetry

¹⁴⁵ *Invective contra medicum*, III, 125: ‘Quando autem Homerus apud illos, quando Virgilius apud nos, aut alii illustres scenicis ludis operam dederunt? Profecto unquam, sed de virtutibus, de naturis hominum ac rerum omnium, atque omnino de perfectione humana, stilo mirabili et quem frustra tibi aperire moliar, tractaverunt.’ Marsh, 102; trans. Marsh, 103.

¹⁴⁶ *Invective contra medicum*, III, 126; Marsh, 102-4, quoting Augustine, *Soliloquies*, I, xv, 27.

¹⁴⁷ *Invective contra medicum*, III, 137; Marsh, 114, referring to Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, XVIII, xxiv.

¹⁴⁸ *Invective contra medicum*, II, 49: ‘Certe, quod scolis omnibus est notum, rethorice facultatis officium est “apposite dicere ad persuadendum, finis persuadere dictione”.’ quoting Cicero, *Inv. Ret.*, I, v, 6; Marsh, 38-9.

¹⁴⁹ *Invective contra medicum*, I, 36: ‘Audi ergo quid Lactantius, vir et poetarum et philosophorum notitia et ciceroniana facundia et, quod cuncta transcendit, catholica religione clarissimus, primo suarum *Institutionum* libro ait: “Nesciunt qui sit poetice licentie modus, quousque progredi fingendo liceat, cum officium poete in eo sit, ut que vera sunt in alia specie obliquis figurationibus cum decore aliquo conversa traducat; totum autem quod referas fingere, idest ineptum esse et mendacem potiusquam poetam.”’ quoting Lactantius, *Div. Inst.*, I, xi, 24-5; Marsh, 28.

benefits from the use of literary devices in that the recovery of meaning is made more challenging and more rewarding. 'Poetic style,' Petrarch argued, 'serves as a stimulus for more intense reflection and as an opportunity for nobler studies.'¹⁵⁰ This is evidenced by Scripture itself, and Trinkaus has correctly observed that Petrarch appears to adhere to Curtius' notion of 'Biblical poetics'.¹⁵¹ The Bible contains many passages which are obscure and perplexing, yet was nevertheless 'uttered by the same Spirit that created humankind and the world'.¹⁵² Both St. Augustine and St. Gregory the Great, Petrarch notes, saw that the apparent obscurity of Scripture has the advantage of permitting numerous interpretations and encouraging the reader to expend effort in studying the text.¹⁵³ So with poetry more generally, Petrarch wrote,

rather than begrudging those who can grasp our work, we offer them this pleasant labour in order to promote their enjoyment and recollection of it. For when we have acquired something with difficulty, we hold it more dear and retain it more diligently.¹⁵⁴

As the handmaiden of philosophy, Petrarch suggested that poetry was able to communicate truths better using apparently 'obscure' devices. The harmony between eloquence and philosophy was preserved, while those features which most clearly distinguished poetry served to underscore its value to the education of the reader.

4. Aristotle's philosophy and Cicero's eloquence in the *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*

In the eyes of many scholars, the contention that Petrarch saw eloquence as superior to philosophy is most strongly supported by the *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, which was finished in 1367 and similarly comes from the final stage in the development of Petrarch's rhetorical thought. Identifying an apparently voluntarist ethic in the invective,

¹⁵⁰ *Invective contra medicum*, III, 132: 'Quod, si forte stilus insuetis videatur occultior, non ea invidia est, sed intentionis animi stimulus, et exercitii nobilioris occasio.' Marsh, 108.

¹⁵¹ Trinkaus, *The Poet as Philosopher*, 102; c.f. E.R. Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. W. R. Trask, (New York, 1953), 40f.

¹⁵² *Invective contra medicum*, III, 132: 'Quid sermo ipse divinus, quem et si valde oderis, tamen aperte calumniari propter metum incendii non audebis? Quam in mutis obscurus atque perplexus est! cum prolatus sit ab eo Spiritu qui homines ipsos mundumque creaverat, nedum, si vellet, et verba nova reperire, et repertis clarioribus uti posset?' Marsh, 108.

¹⁵³ *Invective contra medicum*, III, 132; quoting Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, XI, xv, 19; *En. in psalmos*, cxxvi, 11; cxlvi, 12; Gregory the Great, *Homilies on Ezechiel*, VI, 1; Marsh, 108-10.

¹⁵⁴ *Invective contra medicum*, III, 134: 'Apud poetas igitur o nimium rudis, stili maiestas retinetur ac dignitas, nec capere valentibus invidetur, sed, dulci labore proposito, delectationi simul memorieque consulitur. Cariora sunt enim que cum difficultate quesivimus, accuratiusque servantur...' Marsh, 110, amended.

Gray, Trinkaus and others have discerned an opposition between a rhetoric which activates the will and a philosophy which touches only the intellect. Composed in response to the charges of contemporary Aristotelians like the *Invective contra medicum*, the *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia* is interpreted as containing an unequivocal endorsement of eloquence as a source of truth which implicitly contradicts the notion of rhetoric as a *τέχνη* in harmony with philosophy.

Unlike the *Invective contra medicum*, in the *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia* the argument revolves more closely around the weaknesses of Aristotle's philosophy as an ironical but effective means of dismissing both the charge of ignorance and the pretensions of Petrarch's four Venetian friends. In the fourth book, Petrarch offered a detailed explanation of the moral errors arising from their Aristotelianism. As we have seen in chapter one, Petrarch argued that while Aristotle may have expounded the nature of virtue admirably, he had failed to recognise the true happiness and had no comprehension of the one God. This contention serves as the focus of the subsequent discussion.

Having castigated Aristotle for his ignorance of the *vera felicitas*, Petrarch pre-empted any accusations of injustice by pointing out that he willingly levelled equally stinging criticisms against other august figures, and highlighted Cicero as a particularly illustrative example. In Cicero's works, Petrarch was always delighted to find 'the height of eloquence and a great abundance of eloquent language', but was severely disappointed by the errors which he encountered.¹⁵⁵ '[C]oncerning religion in general and the gods in particular,' Petrarch explained, 'the more eloquently [Cicero] writes, the more vapid I find his old wives' tales about them.'¹⁵⁶ On occasions, it is true, Cicero could write like an Apostle in a manner pleasing to any Christian,¹⁵⁷ but, Petrarch felt, nevertheless returned to his errors like a dog to its vomit.¹⁵⁸ Although it was possible to adduce numerous examples of instances on which Cicero pointed towards the conclusion that 'everything we see leads us to believe that God exists as the creator and ruler of the universe,'¹⁵⁹ Petrarch lamented the fact that he abandoned his near-Christian sentiments¹⁶⁰ for a deplorably pagan polytheism.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁵ *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, IV, 56: 'Adhuc tamen poetarum et philosophorum libros lego, Ciceronis ante alios, cuius apprime et ingenio et stilo semper ab adolescentia delectatus sum. Invenio eloquentie plurimum et verborum elegantium vim maximam.' Marsh, 272; trans. Marsh, 273.

¹⁵⁶ *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, IV, 56: 'Quod ad deos ipsos ... quodque omnino ad religionem spectat, quo disertius dicitur, eo michi inanior est fabella...' Marsh, 272; trans. Marsh, 273.

¹⁵⁷ *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, IV, 60; Marsh, 274; *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, IV, 60-70; Marsh, 274-84.

¹⁵⁸ *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, IV, 75; Marsh, 288; c.f. *Prov.* 26:11; 2 *Peter* 2:22.

¹⁵⁹ *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, IV, 70: '... quamvis et sepe alibi et illic presertim plurima studiose operosissima disputatione perstrinxerit, ad hunc ipsum finem, ut ex his omnibus que videmus, esse Deum et factorem et rectorem omnium cogitemus.' Marsh, 284.

¹⁶⁰ *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, IV, 73; Marsh, 286.

While they may not have matched Cicero's eloquence, the same – or worse – may be said of many others.¹⁶² To Petrarch, the singular and unitary nature of the true God is manifestly obvious,¹⁶³ but yet the ancient writers wasted their rhetorical skill on the false doctrines of numerous gods.¹⁶⁴ Plato and his followers may be excused,¹⁶⁵ but Pythagoras' notion of metempsychosis,¹⁶⁶ and the idea of the existence of countless worlds put forward by Democritus and Epicurus¹⁶⁷ are used as examples of the false philosophies propounded in defiance of truth.

Petrarch's subsequent return to Aristotle's philosophy constitutes a continuation of the same theme. Rather than concentrating on their relative erudition, the comparison between Cicero and Aristotle concentrates on the content of their works. Notwithstanding his own limited understanding of Greek, Petrarch conceded that Aristotle's written style was supposed to have been 'sweet, copious, and ornate',¹⁶⁸ and – avoiding a potentially weak line of argument – implicitly juxtaposes his works with those of Cicero, which were occasionally capable of expressing truths pleasing to the Christian reader. Professing that he had read all of Aristotle's works on ethics, Petrarch sharpened the criticisms already made by distinguishing between knowledge and love, and between understanding and volition.¹⁶⁹ Petrarch did not deny that Aristotle could teach the nature of virtue, but contended that reading his works offered us

none of those exhortations, or only a very few, that goad and inflame our minds to love virtue and hate vice. Anyone looking for such exhortations will find them in our Latin authors, especially in Cicero and Seneca, and (surprisingly) in Horace, a poet coarse in style but very pleasant for his maxims.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶¹ *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, IV, 75-6; Marsh, 288.

¹⁶² *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, IV, 84; Marsh, 294.

¹⁶³ *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, IV, 80; Marsh, 292.

¹⁶⁴ *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, IV, 81ff; Marsh, 292ff.

¹⁶⁵ *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, IV, 87; Marsh, 296.

¹⁶⁶ *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, IV, 84; Marsh, 294.

¹⁶⁷ *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, IV, 86; Marsh, 296.

¹⁶⁸ *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, IV, 105: 'Equidem fateor me stilo viri illius, qualis est nobis, non admodum delectari, quamvis cum in sermone proprio et dulcem et copiosum et ornatum fuisse, Grecis testibus et Tullio autore, didicerim, ante quam ignorantie sententia condemnarer.' Referring to Cicero, *De oratore*, III, xxxv, 141; Marsh, 312.

¹⁶⁹ *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, IV, 107-8; Marsh, 314.

¹⁷⁰ *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, IV, 108: 'Docet ille, non infitior, quid est virtus; at stimulos ac verborum faces, quibus ad amorem virtutis vitique odium mens urgetur atque incenditur, lectio illa vel non habet, vel paucissimos habet. Quos qui querit, apud nostros, precipue Ciceronem atque Anneum, inveniet, et, quod quis mirabitur, apud Flaccum, poetam quidem stilo hispidum, sed sententiis periocundum.' Marsh, 314; trans. Marsh, 315.

This led Petrarch to ask rhetorically what would be the value of knowing what virtue is if such knowledge does not make one love it, and serves as the immediate prelude to the treatment of will and intellect at IV, 111 discussed in a previous chapter.

Although Petrarch praised the written style of both Cicero and Aristotle, his comparison of the two was not intended either as a direct comment on eloquence or as an endorsement of the erudition of Cicero, Horace and Seneca, but rather as a demonstration of the fact that without an understanding of the one God, Aristotle's analysis of virtue was incapable of urging the reader to love the good. Contrary to the interpretations offered by Gray and Trinkaus, Petrarch's remarks in this portion of the *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia* do not illustrate the superiority of eloquence over philosophy, or the association between rhetoric and *voluntas*, but instead underscore the essentially Christian characteristics of the true philosophy.

That is not, however, to say that the *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia* does not contain telling comment on the relationship between eloquence and philosophy and, perhaps unsurprisingly, this is intimately related to Petrarch's discussion of literary style and philosophical merit in Cicero's writings. In castigating Aristotle's philosophy Petrarch recommends the works of Cicero, Horace and Seneca as aids to the cultivation of virtue, and highlights Cicero as being of particular value. While it is true that Petrarch praised his eloquence in the highest possible terms, it is not possible to infer from this that Cicero's erudition alone made his works useful to the Christian reader. Cicero's writing always displayed 'the height of eloquence and a great abundance of elegant language,' but yet Petrarch emphasised that this literary skill could be applied both to truth and to falsehood. In the same way as Horace was praised in spite of his 'coarse style', it seems that in recommending Cicero's works, Petrarch intended to distinguish between the style and content of the exhortations 'that goad and influence our minds to love virtue and hate vice'. Preserving the idea of eloquence as a *τέχνη*, Petrarch simultaneously points to it having a close relationship with the true philosophy to which Aristotle had been oblivious.

There was no doubt, of course, that Cicero was a pagan whom Petrarch could not regard as Christian even in part. Those works which reflected his adherence to an ancient polytheism were, as we have seen, almost painful for Petrarch to read. Perhaps the unconscious recipient of God's grace, however, Cicero was nevertheless able to adduce arguments which could be seen to support the Christian faith. Despite Cicero's Stoic concentration on virtue as an end in itself, Petrarch was able to read his works almost teleologically, and saw that they contained a love for virtue which was of value to the

Christian reader and which could not be found in Aristotle's *Ethics*. Explaining St. Augustine's acknowledgement of his debt to Cicero's *Hortensius*, Petrarch pointed out that

Although our ultimate goal does not lie in virtue, where the philosophers placed it, yet the straight path toward our goal passes through the virtues, and not through virtues that are merely known, I say, but loved. Thus true moral philosophers and valuable teachers of virtues are those whose first and last purpose is to make their students and readers good. They not only teach the definitions of virtue and vice, haranguing us about virtue's splendour and vice's drabness. They also instil in our breasts both love and zeal for what is good, and hatred and abhorrence of evil.¹⁷¹

While Cicero remained in ignorance of the one God, Petrarch suggests that his celebration of virtue and condemnation of vice could, as a result of their congruence with the true faith, induce the reader to love the good. Indicating that virtue should not be idolised for its own sake, Petrarch saw that Cicero's love of virtue could be read as lying on the path to the end to which all Christians should aspire. It is this palpable love of virtue – not his erudition or elegance of language – which allowed Cicero to be counted amongst the 'true moral philosophers' and which appears to have underpinned Petrarch's recommendation of his works as aids to the cultivation of virtue.

Although cloaked by Petrarch's dominant invective concerns, and shrouded by his comparison of Aristotle and Cicero, the impression of the relationship between eloquence and philosophy which emerges from the *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia* is consonant with the mature expression of his views previously observed. Just as 'true moral philosophers' should aim 'to make their students and readers good', the texts of which Petrarch spoke most highly had as their object the inculcation of a love of virtue and a hatred of vice. They sought, in other words, to persuade their readers. Although not unconnected to the elegance of the language in which texts were written, this capacity for persuasion was not reliant solely on eloquence, but rested most firmly on the foundation of true philosophy. Christian truths – which had as their only object the one God, but which 'passe[d] through the virtues' – were the proper subject of eloquence and texts which contained such messages justly deserved reading, even if written by pagans who occasionally drifted into more treacherous waters. Although the true philosophy was its most proper subject, eloquence itself remained a *τέχνη*, a mode of expression capable of communicating either truth or falsehood. Rather than usurping its role, Petrarch saw that eloquence could work in harmony

¹⁷¹ *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, IV, 110: 'Etsi enim non sit in virtute finis noster, ubi eum philosophi posuere, est tamen per virtutes iter rectum eo ubi finis est noster; per virtutes, inquam, non tantum cognitatas, sed dilectas. Hi sunt ergo veri philosophi morales et virtutum utiles magistri, quorum prima et ultima intentio est bonum facere auditorem ac lectorem, quique non solum docent quid est virtus aut vitium preclarumque illud, hoc fuscum nomen auribus instrepunt, sed rei optime amorem studiumque pessimeque rei odium fugamque pectoribus inserunt.' Marsh, 316-8; trans. Marsh, 317-9.

with philosophy, and held up Cicero as the acme of this principle. Despite being a pagan, Cicero had received both the gift of expression and the inspiration of the truth from God, and thus stood in stark contrast to Aristotle, whose works – although well enough written – lacked the necessary basis in truth.

5. Eloquence and philosophy: the heritage of Petrarch's thought

Despite their instinctive appeal, the interpretations of Petrarch's rhetorical theory offered by Seigel and Trinkaus appear to merit revision. On closer analysis, the relationship between eloquence and philosophy in Petrarch's works seems to display none of the tension so critical to the most common readings of key texts. Rather than occupying a position of pre-eminence or offering superior access to moral truths, Petrarch saw eloquence as the natural partner of philosophy. Far from being an entirely separate field of endeavour pursued for its own end, eloquence was a *τέχνη* which allowed the virtuous orator or poet to communicate moral truths so that others might love the good.

While the notion of tension may require emendation, however, the suggestion that Petrarch's understanding of the connection between eloquence and philosophy was based on a Ciceronian model nevertheless retains a certain attraction. Although he was certainly aware of later traditions, Petrarch's treatment of eloquence and philosophy seems to have a strong parallel with arguments found in Cicero's rhetorical treatises, albeit not in the fashion envisaged by many of the interpretations discussed earlier in this chapter. Like Petrarch, Cicero saw an intimate connection between eloquence and philosophy and demonstrated that they could in many respects be regarded as co-dependent. In the *Orator*, for example, Cicero asserted that since the orator was required to speak in a wide range of circumstances and to a variety of different audiences, the study of philosophy was essential to the practice of eloquence.¹⁷² In the *De oratore*, Crassus explains that if an orator was to speak '*de natura, de vitiis hominum, de cupiditatibus, de modo, de continentia, de dolore, de morte,*' it was necessary for him to have the solid understanding of these concepts allowed by the study of philosophy.¹⁷³ Explaining this view more fully, Cicero's characters express the need for philosophical learning in terms of the obligations of persuasion. Since eloquence has the power of driving an audience forward in any direction, it must be combined with the

¹⁷² Cicero, *Orator*, IV, 14.

¹⁷³ Cicero, *De oratore*, I, xv, 67.

personal integrity and wisdom which stem from philosophy; anyone without these will not be an orator, but a madman.¹⁷⁴

Although they each saw a certain connection between eloquence and philosophy, however, the suggestion that Petrarch's understanding of the relationship was based primarily on a Ciceronian model is not as strong as may first be supposed. In several important respects, Petrarch's thought on this subject diverges from Cicero's rhetorical theory, and the appearance of similarity is undermined by deeper points of disagreement. Unlike Petrarch, Cicero's assertion of the co-dependence of eloquence and philosophy was derived from a belief that rhetoric should serve the good of the *res publica*. In the *De remediis utriusque fortune*, Petrarch warned that '*eloquium torrens ... et rapidum*' should be set aside for the good of the *res publica*, but never developed the point further.¹⁷⁵ Indeed, this is the only mention of the *res publica* in relation to eloquence to be found in his works: in pointed contrast to later admirers of his writing, Petrarch pointedly avoided ascribing a civic function to eloquence and often scorned the use of oratorical skills for public functions, such as pleading cases in court.¹⁷⁶ Eloquence – connoting both poetry and prose – served only to make men love the good for the sake of their own moral standing and the justified Christian glory of the orator. For Cicero, however, eloquence – understood merely in terms of its application to oratory – was to be connected with philosophy because of the service that can be done for the *res publica*. Indeed, it is only because of the good which can accrue to the *res publica* that Cicero seemed to connect eloquence with wisdom at all. 'Wisdom without eloquence,' he wrote in the *De inventione*, 'does little to benefit states, but eloquence without wisdom does too much harm and is never advantageous.'¹⁷⁷

As a result of their divergence over the end of eloquence, Cicero and Petrarch also differed over the meaning of the philosophy which is associated with eloquence, and over the role of truth. For Petrarch, the belief that eloquence should take the Christian truths of moral philosophy or theology for its subject was inextricably bound up with the suggestion that eloquence should aim to inculcate a love of the good in others. Although pagan authors like Cicero had expressed truth as a result of the action of grace, there was no doubt in Petrarch's mind that eloquence should be associated only with the one true philosophy which gave access to truth, and that other, 'false' philosophies should be repudiated. Despite Seigel's

¹⁷⁴ *ibid.*, III, xiv, 55.

¹⁷⁵ *De remediis utriusque fortune*, I, 9: 'Gaudium: Eloquium torrens est et rapidum. Ratio: Haud inepte quidam stulti atque improbi eloquentiam furiosi gladio equiparant: utrunque enim reipublice expedit inermem.'

¹⁷⁶ *Sen. XVIII*, 1; *Fam. XXIV*, 3, 2-3. See chapter 3, above.

¹⁷⁷ Cicero, *De inventione*, I, 1; Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric*, 101; G.M.A. Grube, 'Educational, Rhetorical and Literary Theory in Cicero,' *Phoenix* 16 (1962): 234-57; A. Michel, *Rhétorique et philosophie chez Cicerón* (Paris, 1960), *passim*.

attempt to detect the faint trace of Academic scepticism in his works, the philosophy which Petrarch connects with eloquence has a singular and unmistakable identity. For Cicero, however, a sceptical approach was preferable precisely because of the orator's obligation to speak in a range of circumstances for the greater good of the *res publica*.¹⁷⁸ In the *De oratore*, Crassus argues that the orator's task is to convince, and points out that this requires him to examine the detail of whatever matter is being discussed.¹⁷⁹ Antonius, however, challenges this view, claiming that the orator is a specialist and cannot hope to acquire the universal knowledge that he presumes Crassus has recommended.¹⁸⁰ In the second day's debate, Crassus affirms that the orator should be able to adopt any position in the hope of ultimately uncovering the truth. The notion that truth could be revealed from any perspective the orator might be obliged to adopt colours Cicero's understanding of the philosophical learning appropriate to the practice of eloquence. Surveying the various philosophical schools of Antiquity while considering a rhetorical education, therefore, Crassus states that his object is not to discover which was the truest, but which was the most appropriate to the orator¹⁸¹ and, while advocating the necessity of a broad education, highlights Academic scepticism as being of particular value. As an ironist, Socrates is held up for particular praise and Crassus lauds his capacity to speak from a range of different perspectives in the hope of uncovering the truth.¹⁸²

Petrarch's distance from Cicero is further evidenced by his striking lack of interest in the technical aspects of eloquence and, especially in his later writings, prioritisation of the orator's own moral condition. In the *De remediis utriusque fortune*, it has been noted that Petrarch attached more importance to the cultivation of virtue than to the inculcation of rules in describing the education of the orator. Although this reflects his more general disinterest in the divisions of oratory and preoccupation with the capacity of eloquence to communicate virtue, it constitutes a divergence from Cicero's rhetorical theory. While Cicero had stressed that it was necessary for the orator to be well-versed in the virtues,¹⁸³ Winterbottom has rightly observed that 'there is no doubt that [he] was not primarily concerned with the moral aspect.'¹⁸⁴ Throughout his works, Cicero devotes considerable time and energy to examining

¹⁷⁸ On the role of truth in Cicero's understanding of philosophical learning, see, for example, A. Leupin, *Fiction and Incarnation. Rhetoric, Theology and Literature in the Middle Ages*, trans. D. Laatsch, (Minneapolis and London, 2003), 1-10.

¹⁷⁹ Cicero, *De oratore*, I, xxxi, 138.

¹⁸⁰ *ibid.*, I, xlvii, 205ff.

¹⁸¹ *ibid.*, III, xvii, 64.

¹⁸² *ibid.*, III, xix, 72; Panizza, 'Lorenzo Valla's *De vero falsoque bono*,' 80; M. von Albrecht, *Cicero's Style. A Synopsis* (Leiden, 2003), 232-7.

¹⁸³ Cicero, *De oratore*, III, xiv, 55.

¹⁸⁴ Winterbottom, 'Quintilian and the *vir bonus*,' 90.

the technical dimensions of eloquence and the difference types of oratory. Perhaps because his understanding of eloquence was founded on a notion of civic duty, Cicero seems – in direct contrast to Petrarch – to have believed that rhetorical rules were of more importance to the training of an orator than the development of personal virtue. Whereas for Cicero the application of eloquence allowed the assumption of virtue and required a thorough technical training, Petrarch held that although rules may be easily acquired through reading and imitation, virtue was hard-won and crucially important.

It cannot be denied that traces of Cicero's rhetorical theory can be found in Petrarch's works, and the impact of texts such as the *De oratore*, the *Orator*, and the *De inventione* can be observed in frequent quotations and moments of conceptual similarity. Cicero himself figures not merely as a textual authority to be cited with a certain reverence, but also as an occasional exemplar of the proper relationship between eloquence and philosophy. Although he remained in dialogue with Cicero's rhetorical theory in describing this relationship, however, it does not seem justified to describe Petrarch's thought as having been based primarily on a Ciceronian model. Despite Cicero's importance as an authority, the conceptual similarities which can be observed with Petrarch's thought on this subject are not only superficial, but also outweighed by the many differences which divide them.

If Petrarch cannot be said to have been a Ciceronian, that is not, however, to say that he did not make selective use of gnomic quotations and principles while drawing inspiration from other sources, and Cicero's decisive influence on later rhetorical traditions must be recognised in this regard. On the one hand, Cicero's association of rhetoric and philosophy played an important part in the shaping of late Antique and Christian notions of eloquence, while on the other hand, the respects in which Petrarch seems to have diverged most significantly from a Ciceronian model reflect strands in the later use and development of Cicero's thought. While Petrarch may not have based his understanding of the relationship between eloquence and philosophy on a Ciceronian pattern, his thought evokes elements of later rhetorical traditions which drew succour from Cicero's treatises and which continued to view the *De oratore*, the *Orator*, and the *De inventione* as authoritative sources despite often challenging the ideas they contained.

Numerous parallels may be observed between Petrarch's works and post-Ciceronian rhetorical traditions. These parallels reflect both his capacity to reach beyond the confines of Cicero's thought and the breadth of his reading in rhetorical theory. Texts from the late Middle Ages have a place alongside those from Antiquity in his treatment of eloquence, and Petrarch seems to have read many either teleologically or inventively. In some respects, Petrarch betrays the influence of comparatively recent strands of thought and seems to show

himself to have been capable of writing from within a distinctively medieval context. The use of ‘*eloquentia*’ to refer both to poetry and prose, for example, is characteristic of Petrarch’s writings, but is unfamiliar to both classical and late Antique thought. Comparing him to Lovato dei Lovati and Albertino Mussato, Witt has argued that Petrarch’s conflation of prose and poetry shows him to have abandoned the association of poetry with the grammarian’s art.¹⁸⁵ This is consonant with changes in conceptions of poetry since the twelfth century and constitutes a continuation of a medieval trend which, though ultimately based on Cicero’s works, came to reject his more restricted understanding of eloquence. For figures such as Cassiodorus, ‘poetry, considered as metric, was a part of grammar, while as a form of argument, it was a part of topic or dialectic’¹⁸⁶; by 1200, however, ‘the art of poetry came to be considered ... not a branch of grammar, but alternately a kind of argumentation or persuasion ... and a form of composition.’¹⁸⁷

In other respects, Petrarch’s thought recalls traditions which developed in parallel to Cicero’s rhetorical theory and which were of considerable influence during the later Middle Ages. The impact of these traditions can be glimpsed when looking at Petrarch’s emphasis on truth and on the moral character of the orator. In suggesting that eloquence was a mode of communicating truth persuasively, he could draw on numerous sources for inspiration, and – despite the ‘Christian Cicero’s’ sceptical methods – was able to quote Lactantius with particular effect. Boethius’ *De consolatio philosophiae*, however, seems to have been of especial importance to Petrarch, and his discussion of Lady Philosophy’s Muses in the *Invective contra medicum* is both effective and textually accurate. Boethius’ treatise, of course, was of marked importance during the later medieval period, especially from 1300 onwards,¹⁸⁸ and it would perhaps be unsurprising for Petrarch to have drawn inspiration from a work which was the object of intense study in the grammar curriculum.¹⁸⁹ Indeed, the intimate connection between eloquence and truth in Petrarch’s thought seems to echo attempts – frequently inspired by Boethius – to counteract Aristotelian conceptions of rhetoric between the early twelfth and late thirteenth centuries. The disagreement between William of Conches and Hugh of St. Victor over the role of truth in the relationship between rhetoric and philosophy, to take one striking example, appears to recall elements of Petrarch’s use of Boethius in the *Invective contra medicum*.¹⁹⁰ In his commentary on the *De*

¹⁸⁵ Witt, *Footsteps*, 243.

¹⁸⁶ McKeon, ‘Rhetoric in the Middle Ages,’ 28 n.2.

¹⁸⁷ *ibid.*, 28.

¹⁸⁸ *ibid.*, 13, 30-2.

¹⁸⁹ Black and Pomaro, *Boethius’s Consolation of Philosophy*, 3-34.

¹⁹⁰ On this disagreement, see, for example, J. Taylor, ‘Introduction’, in *The Didascalion of Hugh of Saint Victor. A Medieval Guide to the Arts*, trans. J. Taylor, (New York, 1961), 3-39, here 16-18.

consolatio philosophiae (which was also one of the most widely-used glosses in fourteenth-century grammar education), William of Conches – like Petrarch – maintained that eloquence and philosophy were distinct enterprises which were nevertheless connected by their common relationship to truth.¹⁹¹ Associating philosophy with wisdom, William held that while philosophy could be thought of as the knowledge of truth, eloquence was the knowledge of how to state truth appropriately.¹⁹² A similar parallel can be found in the works of St. Bonaventure. In a manner which again recalls part of the argument of the *Invective contra medicum*, Bonaventure challenged St. Thomas Aquinas' view that rhetoric was a part of logic by arguing that it could instead be thought of as a form of truth which moves to love or hate, and which may be seen as an analogue, rather than a subordinate, of logic.¹⁹³

Petrarch's contention that the moral character of the orator was of essential value to rhetoric does not have an immediate point of reference in Boethius or the tradition which he in part inspired, but does call to mind Quintilian's treatment of the '*vir bonus dicendi peritus*' in the *Institutio oratoria*,¹⁹⁴ which was quoted with such approval in the *De remediis utriusque fortune*. Petrarch may not have reproduced the details of Quintilian's argument and avoided defending moral character from a political or civic perspective,¹⁹⁵ but nevertheless replicated the importance he attached to the orator's virtue and adapted it to a Christian context. This association between eloquence and moral character was assimilated by later readers of the *Institutio oratoria* and, having read their works with care, it is not implausible to suggest that Petrarch may also have drawn strength from intellectual heirs of Quintilian such as Cassiodorus, Isidore of Seville and Fortunatianus¹⁹⁶, and was in this regard at least superficially consistent with a strand of rhetorical theory running from late Antiquity to the Christian Middle Ages.

¹⁹¹ C. Jourdain, 'Des commentaires inédits de Guillaume de Conches et de Nicolas Triveth sur la Consolation de la philosophie de Boèce,' *Notices et extraits des manuscrits de la Bibliothèque Impériale et autres bibliothèques* 20 (1862): 40-82, here 72. For William of Conches' views on eloquence, see, for example J. Cadden, 'Science and Rhetoric in the Middle Ages: The Natural Philosophy of William of Conches,' *Journal of the History of Ideas* 56/1 (Jan., 1995): 1-24, and 10 with particular reference to Boethius, *De consolatio philosophiae*, I, pr. 1; c.f. Hugh of St. Victor, *Didascalion*, II, 30; *The Didascalion of Hugh of Saint Victor*, trans. Taylor, 81-2. A further parallel could be drawn with John of Salisbury's struggle with the 'Cornificians', who had attacked the liberal arts, for which see, for example, John of Salisbury, *Metalogicon*, ed. J. B. Hall with K. S. B. Kealin-Rohan, (Turnhout, 1991), I, i, 13.

¹⁹² Jourdain, 'Des commentaires inédits de Guillaume de Conches', 72-3.

¹⁹³ Bonaventure, *De Reductione Artium ad Theologiam*, 4; quoted in McKeon, 'Rhetoric in the Middle Ages,' 24.

¹⁹⁴ Quintilian, *Inst. Orat.*, XII, i, 1; c.f. *Inst. Orat.*, I, ii, 3.

¹⁹⁵ Winterbottom, 'Quintilian and the *vir bonus*'; Leupin, *Fiction and Incarnation*, 16.

¹⁹⁶ Note that Billanovich also draws attention to the similarity between Fortunatianus, *Ars. rhet.*, III, 2 and Petrarch, *Fam.* I, 1, 46; Billanovich, *Petrarca e il Primo Umanesimo*, 322-4.

Notwithstanding the parallels which may be observed with Cicero's rhetorical treatises, Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria*, and the debates surrounding the role of rhetoric in the works of William of Conches and other medieval scholars, Petrarch's understanding of the relationship between eloquence and philosophy was informed most significantly by St. Augustine's *De doctrina christiana*. Indeed, the respects in which Petrarch appears to have been closest to classical texts such as Cicero's *De oratore* and Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria*, as well as those in which he appears to have differed most significantly from their arguments seem to correspond with Augustine's own attitude towards the rhetorical theory of Antiquity, while the manner in which he evoked the spirit of medieval thought similarly dovetails with the use later scholars made of the *De doctrina christiana*.

That Augustine's treatise was a potentially attractive source for Petrarch's understanding of the relationship between eloquence and philosophy can be gauged from its object and influence. Begun in 395 (although not completed until 426/7), the *De doctrina christiana* was a product of Augustine's self-conscious need to bury himself in Scripture and communicate its message to others. Its concern is to explain, first, how one could teach oneself the truths of Christianity, and, second, how one could teach those same truths to a congregation.¹⁹⁷ Offering both an introduction to the interpretation of linguistic 'signs' and a treatment of rhetorical training, it is perhaps best seen as a guide for preaching.¹⁹⁸ As in so many of his other works, Augustine drew heavily on the corpus of classical literature and, especially in regard to the forms of eloquence described in the later portions of the text, it reflects his early experience as a professor of rhetoric in Milan. Cicero's influence looms large and there is much to lend credence to the view that Augustine appropriated Ciceronian rhetoric for Christian ends, although – as Henri-Irénée Marrou has suggested – it would be quite wrong to view it as a mere enumeration of Ciceronian ideas.¹⁹⁹ This adaptation of Ciceronian rhetoric to Christian ends was in later centuries to be of significant importance, and the *De doctrina christiana* was avidly read during the Middle Ages not merely as a guide to exegesis and homiletics, but also as a valuable link between Christian teaching and classical modes. In the last centuries of Antiquity, for example, it was used by Cassiodorus

¹⁹⁷ R. P. H. Green, 'Introduction', in St. Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, trans. R. P. H. Green, (Oxford, 1997), vii-xxiii, here vii-viii. Quotations from the *De doctrina christiana* will refer to this translation, which will hereafter be designated as 'Green'.

¹⁹⁸ There is some disagreement about how best to encapsulate the *De doctrina christiana*, but the most prevalent interpretation regards it as an introduction to homiletics. See, for example, Hagendahl, *Augustine and the Latin Classics*, 2:565-69; C. Mohrmann, 'St. Augustine and the *Eloquentia*,' in *Etudes sur le latin des chrétiens*, 2 vols., (Rome, 1961), 1:351-70; J. J. Murphy, 'St. Augustine and the Debate about a Christian Rhetoric,' *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 46 (1960): 400-10. For the opposing view, according to which the *De doctrina christiana* is seen as a description of a specifically Christian culture, see, for example, Marrou, *Saint Augustin et la fin de la culture antique*, 380-5, 506.

¹⁹⁹ Marrou, *Saint Augustin et la fin de la culture antique*, 508-10, 520, 526.

and Isidore of Seville, and during the Carolingian Renaissance enjoyed great popularity among figures such as Angilbert of Corbie and Hraban Maur.²⁰⁰ Similarly, Peter Abelard and Hugh of St. Victor, in the twelfth, and Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century enthusiastically mined the work,²⁰¹ while in later centuries, the *De doctrina christiana* was of sufficient popularity amongst humanistically-inclined clergy that it was the first book of Augustine's to have been brought into print.²⁰²

Familiar with the *De doctrina christiana*,²⁰³ Petrarch was certainly aware of Augustine's assimilation of classical thought, especially with regard to eloquence. As has already been observed in relation to the *Secretum*, and as Carol Quillen has noted,²⁰⁴ Petrarch signalled his appreciation of Augustine's use of classical literature in a letter to Giacomo Colonna. Had Augustine not clung to ancient authors so readily, Petrarch asserted, he would never have drawn so much material from poets and philosophers nor would he have 'embellished them with so many ornaments from the orators and historians.'²⁰⁵ At a rhetorical as much as at a philosophical level, Petrarch was conscious that Augustine offered a bridge between classical and Christian writing, and constituted a precedent for the free adaptation of the literary devices and rhetorical theory of pagan authors to Christian purposes. Looking to the *De doctrina christiana* for inspiration, it would not merely have been consistent, but also almost natural for Petrarch to have referred frequently and openly to the rhetorical thought of Cicero and Quintilian, for example, and to have treated them as venerable authorities despite the divergence of his own thought from the conceptual structures supporting their works. Similarly, the use of the *De doctrina christiana* as a potential source would have offered numerous opportunities for exploring parallels with later authors whose works drew on Augustine's treatise in a comparable fashion.

The proximity of Petrarch's rhetorical thought to Augustine's *De doctrina christiana* is evident when one examines some of the key features of the relationship between eloquence and philosophy in the work of the former. Developing an association between

²⁰⁰ Green, 'Introduction', xx-xxi.

²⁰¹ J. Wawrykow, 'Reflections on the Place of the *De doctrina christiana* in High Scholastic Discussions of Theology,' in English, ed., *Reading and Wisdom*, 99-125.

²⁰² J. Monfasani, 'The *De doctrina christiana* and Renaissance Rhetoric,' in English, ed., *Reading and Wisdom*, 172-88, here 172-3.

²⁰³ Although it should be noted that Petrarch only seems to have quoted from it directly on one occasion. *Rerum memorandarum libri*, I, 25; for which see Gerosa, *Umanesimo cristiano del Petrarca*, 168, n.61.

²⁰⁴ Quillen, 'Plundering the Egyptians,' 154.

²⁰⁵ *Fam.* II, 9, 8: '... itaque Augustinum et eius libros simulata quadam benivolentia complexum, re autem vera a poetis et philosophis non avelli. Quid autem inde divellerer, ubi ipsum Augustinum inherentem video? quod nisi ita esset, nunquam libros *De civitate Dei*, ut reliqua sileam, tanta philosophorum et poetarum calce fundaret, nunquam tantis oratorum ac historicorum coloribus exornaret.' Quillen, 'Plundering the Egyptians,' 154.

eloquence and truth already explored in the Coronation Oration and the *Africa*, Petrarch had connected a personal apprehension of virtue with a need to communicate truth to others in his letter to Tommaso da Messina. As we have seen, he contended that the philosopher's concern for the soul should be married with the orator's erudition of language. In this, Petrarch indicates that eloquence should be regarded as a *τέχνη* which – although it could also express falsehood – should be deployed to educate others in virtue, teaching the good to be pursued and the evil to be avoided. Furthermore, in *Fam.* X, 4 and the *Invective contra medicum*, the literary devices which could be used to ornament such exhortations to virtue are implicitly paralleled with the recovery of Christian truths from Scriptural passages rich in allegorical language. This image of eloquence as a *τέχνη* used for Christian purposes, and founded upon a personal understanding of truth which could be recovered through reading echoes an identical belief underpinning Augustine's treatment of homiletic rhetoric in the *De doctrina christiana*. Indeed, it is perhaps with respect to the relationship between eloquence and truth that Augustine differs most significantly from his classical antecedents.

A comprehensively-conceived work, Augustine's treatise was intended to explain 'the process of discovering what we need to learn, and the process of presenting what we have learnt.'²⁰⁶ An understanding of Christian principles derived from Scripture precedes and is tied to the exposition of those truths: for Augustine a correct understanding of exegetical practices was the essential predicate of effective preaching. Acknowledging that Scripture consisted of complex 'signs' which must be correctly interpreted before the truth could be understood, Augustine dedicated the second and third books of the *De doctrina christiana* to an explanation of how these signs should be approached. In the fourth book, Augustine turned to address the communication of truth and the connection between the forms of erudition proper to rhetoric and the truth recovered from Scripture. Teaching, he explained, had as its object the inculcation of a love of God and virtue, and employed eloquence as a *τέχνη* tied to a concrete understanding of the truth rather than as an end in itself.²⁰⁷ Consisting of certain rules regarding the form of words, Augustine – like Petrarch – could be used to commend both truth and falsehood,²⁰⁸ but should be deployed in pursuit of the former rather than the latter. 'Who,' he asked, 'could dare to maintain that truth, which depends on us for its defence, should stand unarmed against falsehood?'²⁰⁹ Challenging those who espouse untruths, eloquence should be used to 'communicate what is good and eradicate

²⁰⁶ Augustine, *De doctrina christiana*, I, 1; trans. Green, 8.

²⁰⁷ Although Marrou correctly points out that it would perhaps be more appropriate to describe Augustine's 'eloquentia' as an *ars rhetorica*. Marrou, *Saint Augustin et la fin de la culture antique*, 519.

²⁰⁸ Augustine, *De doctrina christiana*, II, 132; IV, 4.

²⁰⁹ *ibid.*, IV, 4; Green, 101.

what is bad, and in this process of speaking must win over the antagonistic, rouse the apathetic, and make clear to those who are not conversant with the matter under discussion what they should expect.²¹⁰ Theological truths were the proper subject matter of eloquence, but at the nexus of the relationship between the two lay a personal understanding of Christian truths. In describing this, Augustine remodelled Cicero's assertion of the need for wisdom in a manner which chimes with Petrarch's appropriation of Ciceronian notions in the *De remediis utriusque fortune*. 'Even those who believed in teaching the art of rhetoric,' Augustine wrote, 'declared that wisdom without eloquence was of little value to society, but that eloquence without wisdom was generally speaking a great nuisance, and never beneficial.'²¹¹ Rather than being related to any sense of civic duty or Stoic conception of the good, this wisdom was unambiguously Christian: 'the wisdom of what a person says,' Augustine explained, 'is in direct proportion to his progress in learning the Holy Scriptures.'²¹² The Scriptures, moreover, should not merely be understood, but taken to heart and in the same way as in the *De vita solitaria*, Augustine argued that the moral life of the orator was of crucial importance to his use of eloquence, for while the wicked man might educate 'those who are eager to learn', 'he is useless to his own soul.'²¹³ The life of a good man could in a sense become a source of eloquence in itself.²¹⁴ It was, Augustine believed, possible to 'visualise it as wisdom proceeding from its own home (...a wise person's heart) and eloquence, like an ever-present slave, following on behind without ever having to be summoned.'²¹⁵

Despite the absolute importance Augustine attached to the study of Scripture, he did not deny that the works of pagan authors could be of great use to a Christian orator seeking to communicate the truth. Classical literature would, he believed, repay the effort of reading, and contended that it could be of value to the Christian student not merely as an exemplar of rhetorical techniques, but also as a corpus containing laudable opinions. Although Augustine enthusiastically appropriated and adapted Cicero's treatment of the three functions of eloquence (to instruct, to delight and to move),²¹⁶ and the three styles of rhetoric (restrained, mixed and grand),²¹⁷ he shared Petrarch's un-classical disdain for the learning of rules.²¹⁸

²¹⁰ *ibid.*, IV, 14; Green, 103.

²¹¹ *ibid.*, IV, 18, referring to Cicero, *De inventione*, I, 1; Green, 104.

²¹² Augustine, *De doctrina christiana*, IV, 19; Green, 104; c.f. Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, XIV, xxviii. For further meanings attached to 'sapientia' in Augustine's works, see Marrou, *Saint Augustin et la fin de la culture antique*, 564-9.

²¹³ Augustine, *De doctrina christiana*, IV, 151, referring to *Eccles.* 37:2; Green, 142.

²¹⁴ Augustine, *De doctrina christiana*, IV, 158.

²¹⁵ *ibid.*, IV, 30; Green, 107.

²¹⁶ *ibid.*, IV, 74, referring to Cicero, *De oratore*, 69; for which see Marrou, *Saint Augustin et la fin de la culture antique*, 510.

²¹⁷ Augustine, *De doctrina christiana*, IV, 96, referring to Cicero, *Orator*, 101.

The *De doctrina christiana* avoids the detailed discussion of rhetorical rules common to classical treatises²¹⁹ and instead advises that ‘given a sharp and eager mind, eloquence is picked up more readily by those who read and listen to the words of the eloquent than by those who follow the rules of eloquence.’²²⁰ Classical works could be mined for valuable lessons, and this was as true of moral philosophy as of the details of rhetorical rules. Prefiguring Petrarch’s defence of Cicero’s works against the Aristotelianism of his four Venetian friends in the *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, and recommendation of Virgil and Homer in *Fam.* X, 4, Augustine admitted that works by pagan authors contained much that was deplorable, but nevertheless recognised that by God’s grace they also contained truths consonant with the Christian faith. ‘Like the treasures of the ancient Egyptians,’ Augustine wrote,

who possessed not only idols and heavy burdens, which the people of Israel hated and shunned, but also vessels and ornaments of silver and gold, and clothes, which on leaving Egypt the people of Israel, in order to make better use of them, surreptitiously claimed for themselves ... similarly all the branches of pagan learning contain not only false and superstitious fantasies and burdensome studies that involve unnecessary effort, which each of us must loathe and avoid as under Christ’s guidance we abandon the company of pagans, but also studies for liberated minds which are more appropriate to the service of the truth, and some very useful moral instruction, as well as various truths about monotheism to be found in their writers.²²¹

It was their occasional monotheistic content, rather than anything else, which formed the basis of Petrarch’s defence of Cicero’s works in the *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, and it is striking that, like Augustine, Petrarch anxiously excoriated those passages in which Cicero returned to his pagan tendencies.

Deriving divine truth from Scripture, and valuable points concerning the rules of eloquence and monotheism from the works of pagan authors, it fell to the Christian orator to communicate a knowledge of and love for the good²²² by making clear to the reader what had previously been hidden from him.²²³ Although he had little concern for formal rules, Augustine nevertheless held that this task necessarily obliged the preacher to make use of different rhetorical devices. It has already been observed that Augustine adapted Cicero’s notion of the three forms of eloquence, but his sophisticated appreciation of Biblical exegesis

²¹⁸ Marrou, *Saint Augustin et la fin de la culture antique*, 519-20.

²¹⁹ Augustine, *De doctrina christiana*, IV, 11, referring to Cicero, *De oratore*, I, lxxxvii, 91.

²²⁰ Augustine, *De doctrina christiana*, IV, 8; Green, 102.

²²¹ *ibid.*, II, 144-5; Green, 64-5. It is somewhat surprising – especially given the title of the paper – that the parallels between Petrarch’s remarks in the *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia* and this passage of the *De doctrina christiana* do not receive closer attention in Quillen, ‘Plundering the Egyptians’.

²²² Augustine, *De doctrina christiana*, II, 148.

²²³ *ibid.*, IV, 72.

led him also to place emphasis on other techniques available to the orator. In a manner which recalls Petrarch's defence of allegorical language in the *Invective contra medicum* and definitions of the task of poetry (with reference to Lactantius) in the Coronation Oration, Augustine spoke highly of the benefits of using imagery. 'No-one disputes,' he wrote, 'that it is much more pleasant to learn lessons presented through imagery, and much more rewarding to discover meanings that are won only with difficulty.'²²⁴ What held for the reading of Scripture also held for the explanation of its messages: for, as Marrou has put it, 'le style chrétien sera donc un style biblique.'²²⁵ Just as Petrarch believed that it was poetry's task to reveal truth through imagery, so for Augustine, Christian teaching benefitted from figural language both in the reading and in the retelling.

6. The place of eloquence in the context of Petrarch's moral philosophy

In those interpretations which have seen rhetoric as occupying a more exalted position than philosophy in Petrarch's rhetorical thought, the practice of eloquence seems unusual and even puzzling when it is set alongside his broader moral concerns. The elevation of eloquence to the status of an end in itself seems to present Petrarch almost as a literary dilettante: dedicated to the pursuit of a purely literary art, he would appear to have been without a compelling reason to yoke his erudition to moral concerns, yet with an excuse to indulge the inconsistency of which he has so frequently been accused by historians.

As the preceding analysis has shown, however, Petrarch seems to have understood the relationship between eloquence and philosophy to have been characterised more by symbiosis and harmony than by tension and conflict. Committed to the communication of truth and bound up with the moral condition of the orator or poet, he saw eloquence as a *τέχνη* which involved the use of figural devices, and allegory in particular, to impart the love of the good more effectively. Moral truth was the proper subject matter of eloquence, and its principles were, for Petrarch, understood through moral philosophy and the cultivation of personal virtue through the reading of texts both Biblical and classical. As such, the practice of eloquence appears as a natural continuation of Petrarch's moral philosophy and throughout his writings there is a clear sense that the moral impulse which drove him to seek after virtue and the love of God was the same as that which drove him to impart a knowledge of and affection for the good to others in his poetry and prose.

²²⁴ *ibid.*, II, 13; Green, 33.

²²⁵ Marrou, *Saint Augustin et la fin de la culture antique*, 529.

Although drawing succour from classical and medieval thought, association between eloquence and philosophy in Petrarch's works appears to be a consequence not of a burgeoning Ciceronianism that foreshadowed the rhetorical theory of the later Renaissance, but of the careful study of St. Augustine's *De doctrina christiana*. Exploring connections with Cicero, Quintilian, Cassiodorus, Isidore of Seville and others from within an intellectual framework evocative of the medieval reception of the *De doctrina christiana*, Petrarch developed a distinctly Christian understanding of eloquence modelled after Augustine's treatise. Taking from the *De doctrina christiana* a distinctive emphasis on the importance of truth to the function and practice of eloquence, Petrarch – like Augustine – developed a rhetorical theory which, despite its willingness to derive valuable lessons from the pagan classics, prioritised a consistent moral message and related the personal search for virtue to the obligation to communicate the good to others in an appropriate form. In this respect, Petrarch's understanding of the relationship between eloquence and philosophy is in keeping with his broader assimilation of St. Augustine's thought. Having developed a coherent programme of personal moral reformation which emphasises the rational extirpation of worldly desires and the pursuit of truth under the influence of St. Augustine in the *Secretum*, the *De otio religioso* and the *De vita solitaria*, it seems logical that Petrarch should have also seen these works as a prelude to and realisation of a rhetorical theory also developed in St. Augustine's shadow which saw the pursuit of virtue as a component of and reason for the communication of truth.

Conclusion

This study has shown that, far from having adopted an eclectic and unsystematic approach to ethical questions as a result of his humanistic and literary interests, Petrarch propounded a coherent and consistent moral philosophy which embraced the abstract, the practical and the didactic.

Portraying man as being caught in a bodily prison which left him prone to worldly desires and despair, Petrarch described the means by which he could embrace virtue and merit the *vera felicitas* that could be enjoyed after death in a cogent fashion throughout his works. *Accidia* and desire – together with the sorrow they produced – were, for Petrarch, the consequence of an incorrect *voluntas* which stemmed from an attempt to find happiness in a temporal world that was continually shifting and unstable. This *voluntas*, however, was itself the consequence of a forgetfulness of the identity of the one true happiness, and an ignorance of man's true nature. The *vera felicitas* was only to be found in the company of God after death, and the realisation of this fact was intimately connected with a love of the divine, the pursuit of virtue and the contempt for worldly things. As Petrarch explained in the *Secretum*, earthly desires and despair could only be cast off, and a love of God fostered through a meditation on death and the application of reason. By meditating on his own mortality, a man would come to appreciate the foolishness of seeking happiness in a world which was always subject to death, decay and the fickleness of fortune. By applying the gift of reason, he would come to realise the truth of his own nature, a truth which affirmed that happiness could consist only in the eternal. Abandoning worldly desires and recognising his own true nature, a man would come to orient himself towards God and will only the good. This was not to diminish the role of grace or the power of prayer. For Petrarch, rational self-transformation worked in co-operation both with God's grace and the efficacy of prayer. Man's struggle for virtue operates within the context of grace, while prayer performed the important role of strengthening his resolve in an arduous and sometimes lonely quest.

Turning from an abstract consideration of virtue to a more practical philosophy of living, Petrarch used the terms '*otium*' and '*solitudo*' to describe the virtuous life. In the *De otio religioso*, Petrarch considered the same threats to happiness and virtue as in the *Secretum*, but using imagery drawn from a long heritage of Christian ascetic thought on the

'Three Enemies of Man'. As a response to the 'wiles of demons', the 'snares of the world' and the 'lures of the flesh', *otium* embodied the moral programme which the *Secretum* was intended to inculcate and – in addition to a form of salutary reading – was founded on the belief that man could come to an understanding of his true nature through rational self-examination and reflection on the fleetingness of the corporeal world. *Otium*, indeed, could be thought of as a form of active leisure in that, while it required sincere intellectual effort, it entailed repose from the *accidia* and desire which produced sorrow, and a *mens quieta* which was able to 'see' God clearly. Although again expressed in different terms, *solitudo* was similarly an emblem for the life of virtue envisaged in the *Secretum*. Carefully distinguished from the *solitudo loci* and the *solitudo temporis* in the *De vita solitaria*, the true form of solitude – the *solitudo animi* – was an intellectual concept more than a description of a physical condition, and involved a freedom from the desire to involve oneself in *res aliena*. Noting the restlessness, unhappiness and despair to which the *occupatus* was prey, Petrarch saw *solitudo* – like *otium* – as a *vacatio a mendacibus*, and connected it not only with meditation, prayer and study, but also with the rational pursuit of self-knowledge while making extensive use of landscape imagery to reflect the peace which resulted.

An integral part of both *otium* and *solitudo*, friendship was for Petrarch a vital component of the life of virtue and could be understood as an expression of virtuous living. A function of Christian *amor*, friendship was presented as having been the consequence of the love which arose out of an orientation of the self towards God. Like *otium* and *solitudo*, it necessarily involved the pursuit of self-knowledge and a scorn for the blandishments of the corporeal world, but was an interpersonal manifestation of a deeply personal moral quest. Although the love of God obliged one to love humanity as a whole, Petrarch saw that the cultivation of a few friendships could serve both as an aid to, and as an expression of virtue.

Despite the fact that they have frequently been presented as having been in tension, Petrarch saw eloquence as the counterpart of moral philosophy and envisaged rhetoric – which embraced both prose and poetry – as an essentially didactic tool that could be used to communicate the moral truths which he had explored personally for the benefit of others. A *τέχνη* rather than an end in itself, Petrarch recognised that eloquence involved the use of certain figural devices, but most properly took moral truth for its subject. Having engaged in the practice of moral philosophy himself, and having studied Biblical and classical texts with care, the orator could use his craft to inculcate in others a love for virtue and a hatred of vice. Seeking to impart an understanding of virtue, eloquence, moreover, was not merely attached to the orator's personal apprehension of moral philosophy, but was in many senses also an

obligation imposed by the orator's virtue. Thus eloquence became both the medium for Petrarch's moral philosophy and an expression of his own search for virtue.

Although Petrarch made frequent use of the works of classical authors ranging from Cicero and Seneca to Virgil and Horace, this study has also demonstrated that the conceptual foundations of his moral philosophy was based on a Christian theology derived principally from the writings of St. Augustine. Rather than using such works as Cicero's *Tusculan disputations* and Seneca's *Epistolae morales* as repositories of a philosophy the precepts of which could be reproduced uncritically, Petrarch employed selective quotations in a gnomic fashion, and appropriated imagery in a similar manner. Recognising that St. Augustine himself had been heavily influenced by his knowledge of ancient thought – particularly Cicero's *Hortensius* – Petrarch found in Augustine's works a precedent for integrating references drawn from classical literature into the framework of Christian moral theology.

From works such as the *De vera religione* and the *Soliloquies*, Petrarch derived an understanding of the opposition of the fleeting temporal world and the enduring truth of the eternal, and an appreciation of the role of reason in determining virtue. In contrast to St. Augustine's later, more fideistic writings, these works illustrated that while man was continually drawn towards temporalities which could lead only to sorrow and dissatisfaction, he possessed the capacity to orient himself towards God and merit the one true happiness by recognising the inadequacy of the corporeal world and by using the divine gift of reason to unveil the truth which resided within him. Using language which shared much in common with Stoic philosophy, despite its renunciation of voluntarism and scepticism, Augustine's early works provided Petrarch with a model for the role accorded to reason and the *meditatio mortis* in the *Secretum*, while at the same time allowing the possibility for classical quotation without fear of inconsistency.

Petrarch carried Augustine's early emphasis on reason and the transience of worldly things into his treatment of *otium* and *solitudo*. Despite appropriating medieval tropes – such as the 'Three Enemies of Man' and the imagery of asceticism inherited from the Desert Fathers – in the *De otio religioso*, and employing classical motifs – such as the opposition of the *occupatus* and *solitarius*, and the contrast between *rus* and *urbs* – in the *De vita solitaria*, Petrarch appears to have modelled the two concepts after Augustine's notion of *vacatio*. Each involving activities which bear the hallmarks of later traditions, Petrarch nevertheless invested both *otium* and *solitudo* with the essential characteristics of Augustine's early theology. Means of conceiving of the virtuous life, *otium* and *solitudo* were also a freedom from cares in that they required the intellectual negation of desire and orientation of the self towards God in the same way as for *vacatio* in St. Augustine's works.

Similarly, Petrarch's conception of friendship bears similarities with classical – and especially Ciceronian – notions of *amicitia*. As this study has demonstrated, however, Petrarch seems to have read classical texts not as archetypes, but as pointing towards a Christian understanding of the concept, and as mines of convenient literary allusions. Despite often using the language of Ciceronian *amicitia*, a close analysis of the texts reveals that Petrarch's friendship was characterised by a reorientation of the word *amor* which was deeply Christian. Viewing *amor* in a manner strongly evocative of St. Augustine's theology, while also evoking the spirit of medieval monastic thought, Petrarch successfully integrated *amicitia* into the framework of a moral system which depended on the rational extirpation of worldly desires and the pursuit of divine knowledge, and made the cultivation of close friendships a greater moral obligation than it was for Cicero or Seneca.

Petrarch's appropriation of St. Augustine's thought, and recognition of the scope which it allowed for the exploration and use of classical literature is perhaps most strongly evident in his understanding of the relationship between eloquence and moral philosophy. Despite claims that Petrarch's conception of this relationship was based on a Ciceronian model and prioritised eloquence over philosophical consistency, his emphasis on truth and the moral condition of the orator, as well as his apparent disregard for rhetorical technicalities in education sets him apart from classical thought. Parallels can, of course, be drawn between elements of his concept of eloquence and rhetorical theories developed by figures such as Cicero, Quintilian and Boethius, and points of similarity can also be observed with later medieval traditions, but the co-dependence of eloquence and moral philosophy in Petrarch's thought, combined with the greater importance attached to the orator's inculcation of virtue than his understanding of rules seem to mark Petrarch's thought out as having been influenced most strongly by a reading of St. Augustine's *De doctrina christiana*. Offering Petrarch a model for recommending both Biblical study and the reading of classical texts, the *De doctrina christiana* also allowed him the possibility to present eloquence as an integral part of a system of moral theology in which truth and virtue co-existed.

The re-evaluation of Petrarch's moral philosophy, and its debt to St. Augustine's theology, which this study has offered has a number of important implications for our understanding of Petrarch's life and of the intellectual development of the Renaissance more generally.

In that Petrarch can be shown to have engaged more systematically with moral philosophy than previously supposed, it seems reasonable to suggest that the trajectory of his intellectual development would merit re-examination. The notion that Petrarch experienced a

'crisis' based on a shift in his philosophical orientation during the 1340s is, as we have seen, integral not only to many biographical studies, but also to the many attempts which have been made to reconstruct the chronology of his writings and the compositional layers within certain works. The concept of 'crisis' is, however, significantly challenged by the suggestion that Petrarch propounded a coherent moral philosophy under the influence of St. Augustine. Although this perhaps makes Petrarch's habit of continually revising his works more pertinent a consideration, the greater consistency which many seem to express appears to indicate that it might be more appropriate to speak of a gradual change in emphasis, rather than of a radical shift occasioned by the rediscovery of particular texts when adopting a biographical perspective. By the same token, the importance of certain events – particularly the rediscovery of Cicero's letters to Atticus in the library of Verona Cathedral – and the manner of reading classical texts, may also merit reconsideration. From a more philological perspective, the dating of works in relation to a supposed intellectual crisis involving a transition from one philosophical outlook to another appears to be brought into question by the consistency of Petrarch's moral philosophy. This applies particularly to a number of letters in the *Familiars* which have been thought to communicate either Stoical or fideistic viewpoints, and to several of the poems in the *Canzoniere*, but relates most particularly to the *Secretum*. As has been demonstrated, most recent attempts to date the *Secretum* have relied on identifying compositional layers in the text and relating them to particular conceptions of 'crisis'. Having demonstrated that the passages supposed to demonstrate a later, Stoical pattern of thought can be viewed as consistent with a prevailing early-Augustinian theology, however, the identity of compositional layers and the nature of Petrarch's revisions seems to be brought into question. Together with problems which surround several of the letters and poems used for comparison by those such as Baron and Rico, it seems that the *Secretum* would reward further analysis.

Petrarch's persistent reputation as the 'first modern man,' and as a figure of tremendous importance to the beginnings of the Renaissance are similarly brought into sharp focus by this study. Where he is viewed less as an uncritical humanistic aphorist in ethical matters and more as a systematic moral philosopher writing under the influence of St. Augustine, Petrarch's position in historical thought may raise some questions both about the nature of the interface between the 'Middle Ages' and the Renaissance, and about the identity and development of humanism in Italy. Although Petrarch's intense interest in classical literature and deep involvement in philological enterprises are beyond question, his use of Augustinian theology and exploitation of resonances between Christian thought and ancient writings seems to pose a challenge to attempts to present him as having helped to

usher in an intellectual outlook at variance with earlier traditions, and to the meaning which is attached to his humanism. If the Christian content of his thought may be seen as having been much greater and more systematically applied than previously supposed, and his relationship with classical texts more literary than conceptual, how significant was his use of classical literature, and how different was his intellectual outlook from previous centuries? By the same token, the Augustinian roots of his thought seem to raise issues connected with Petrarch's reception in later centuries. We have already seen that many of his contemporaries and near-contemporaries in Italy and beyond recognised and appreciated Petrarch's attempts to propound a coherent moral philosophy in a Christian mould, but – having reconstructed his thought – it is reasonable to ask how far that philosophical programme was understood and reproduced. The manner in which Petrarch's moral philosophy was read seems to offer an intriguing opportunity to trace moments of continuity and discontinuity in the works of later humanists such as Coluccio Salutati, and in the emergence of such genres as villa literature, which tended to address themes – such as solitude – which had been of such importance to Petrarch. Similarly, where Petrarch's debt to St. Augustine's early works is acknowledged, it seems not invalid to question how strong an influence this had, and – given some of the Platonic and neo-Platonic resonances of his thought – it would certainly not be unjust to examine the heritage of his thought in the development of later, more explicitly Platonic forms of theology in the works of such figures as Marsilio Ficino.

Appendix

A comparison of Petrarch, *De remediis utriusque fortune*, I, 69 and Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations*

Petrarch

Ratio: Est hoc quidem de quo multa dici possint; et quando huc me trahis, insistam. Inter multas, fateor, mira hec amantium amentia, non solum apud vulgus, ubi, consuetudine in naturam versa, furor omnis excusabilis, sed apud utriusque lingue doctissimos. Nam et poetas Graiorum et vestros quedam de alienis, multa de suis amoribus plausibiliter conscripsisse compertum est; atque unde morum infamiam merebantur, eloquentie gloriam consecutos.

Tolerabilior apud illos Sappho: etas, sexus, animi levitas, puellam excusant.

Cicero

Petrarch's reference to Sappho has no parallel in Cicero's original, but this is perhaps not unexpected given the poets mentioned in the following sentences. Petrarch was certainly aware of Sappho's place in the history of Greek love poetry (q.v. *Fam.* XXI, 8, 6) and may also have known from Ovid that her influence on Alcaeus was considerable. (q.v. Ovid, *Heroides*, XV, 29-30). Carraud (2: 322) also identifies Horace, *Odes*, II, xiii, 30-34 as a possible source on the grounds that 'c'est Horace qui qualifie Sappho de toute jeune femme (*puella*)'. This passage is again recommended by the pairing of Sappho and Alcaeus, although it lacks the detail which Ovid provides. The fact that Petrarch excuses only Sappho from amongst the Greek poets is, however, perhaps a little surprising. In the *De otio religioso*, for example, Homer and Menander are set alongside Virgil and Terence (*De otio*, I, 8) and Petrarch can think of almost no praise too high for Homer in a letter to Nicholas Sygeros on 10th January 1354 (*Fam.* XVIII, 2, 10-12; see also *Fam.* XXIV, 12). The absence

of Homer, Menander, Euripides and others might be explained by the conjecture that, unlike Cicero, Petrarch intended '*poetas Graiorum*' to refer only to love poets.

Sed quid Anacreonti facias? Quid Alceo?
Quorum uterque non poeta modo insignis,
sed vir fortis et rebus gestis in sua republica
clarus fuit.

[IV, xxxiii, 71] Fortis vir in sua re publica
cognitus quae de iuvenum amore scribit
Alcaeus! Nam Anacreontis *quidem tota*
poësis est amatoria.

Petrarch's conflation of Alcaeus and Anacreon – via '*uterque*' – is slightly puzzling, especially as Cicero's original quite clearly indicates that '*fortis vir in sua re publica*' refers only to Alcaeus, who was closely involved in the politics of Lesbos. There is no possibility that a true redaction of *Tusc.* IV, xxxiii, 71 could yield Petrarch's implied assertion that Anacreon was also involved in public affairs. It is tempting to suggest that this apparent error could be explained as a quotation from memory, but this seems unlikely.

Seu quid ex vestris Ovidio, Catullo,
Propertio, Tibullo, quorum nullum ferme
nisi amatorium est poema?

[IV, xxxiii, 71] *Maxime vero omnium*
flagrasse amore Rheginum Ibycum apparet
ex scriptis.

Here, Ovid, Catullus, Propertius and Tibullus obviously stand in place of Ibycus of Rhegium, and mark a transition from Greek to Latin poets not found in *Tusc.* (Cicero's earlier quotations from Caecilius and Apollonius of Rhodes at IV, xxxii, 68-9 indicate a blurring of the distinction between the two, and permit him to keep the focus of his attack on Greek modes.) Although Ratio's later remarks are dominated by references to Plato culled from Aulus Gellius, Petrarch's decision to diverge from Cicero's original is comprehensible in that it allows him not merely to repeat a familiar statement on Latin love poets (c.f. *Fam.* IX, 4, 14, noting the order) on the basis of knowledge, but also permits him to group classical paganism under one heading. To have continued with Cicero's Hellenistic focus would perhaps have opened Petrarch to accusations of imitation without understanding and of implicitly excusing the Latin love poets.

Petrarch's continuation of Cicero's theme – albeit with a Latin twist – may suggest that he was perhaps not quoting from memory, but following the text of *Tusc.* carefully and deliberately. The inclusion of the phrase '*nisi amatorium est poema*', which mirrors Cicero's '*tota poësis est amatoria*' in the previous sentence of *Tusc.*, seems to add weight to this argument, but infers either a hasty and careless reading, or the use of a corrupt redaction. Although it is not inconceivable that Petrarch inverted and replaced '*tota poësis est amatoria*' while using an accurate redaction of the text, it seems unclear why he should have

felt the need to do so having so neatly repeated Cicero's reference to Alcaeus and Anacreon and having at his disposal the perfectly serviceable '*Maxime vero omnium flagrasse amore...apparet ex scriptis*' which could easily have been amended to apply to any of the four Latin poets mentioned.

Quanquam quid poetas, quibus, nescio unde, maior licentia data est, et non potius vitae duces arguam: philosophos?

[IV, xxxiii, 70] *Sed poëtas ludere sinamus, quorum fabulis in hoc flagitio versari ipsum videmus Iovem. Ad magistros virtutis, philosophos, veniamus, qui amorem negant stupri esse ...*

The connection between Petrarch's '*Quanquam quid poetas...*' and Cicero's '*Sed poëtas ludere...*' is speculative, but is not implausible. In Cicero's original, the argument has a repetitive quality. At *Tusc.* IV, xxxiii, 70, Cicero uses the remarks quoted above to signal a transition from his discussion of the comedies of Caecilius and the tragic poetry of Apollonius of Rhodes to a scathing but erratic treatment of Greek gymnasia, philosophers and Epicurus. By *Tusc.* IV, xxxiii, 71, however, the focus returns to poets and '*Fortis vir in sua re publica...*' Having drifted from his subject, Cicero is then obliged at *Tusc.* IV, xxxiv, 72 once more to redirect the argument towards philosophers, particularly Plato and the Stoics. What Petrarch loses in textual fidelity in repeating '*... poëtas ... philosophos...*,' therefore, he gains in coherence and his argument proceeds neatly from poetry to philosophy. This would seem to provide further support for the contention that Petrarch wrote this portion of the *De remediis*, I, 69 with a copy of *Tusc.* to hand, although its quality is still difficult to determine.

Ubi, hercle, gaudeas gravitatis multo plus vestris fuisse quam grecis; vix enim occurret horum aliquis tam perditus, qui non dicam tale aliquid fecerit, sed non libere totum hoc vanitatis genus irriserit atque damnaverit.

Apud illos, autem, non comunes quosque, sed severissimos philosophorum stoicos, ipsumque – quod miraberis – Platonem, in hoc errore versatos scimus.

[IV, xxxiv, 71] *Philosophi sumus exorti et auctore quidem nostro Platone, quem non iniuria Dicaearchus accusat, qui amoris auctoritatem tribueremus.*

This sentence may pick up the commentary on *Tusc.* which Petrarch was obliged to leave after '*amatorium est poema*' for the sake of coherence. Having removed Cicero's unnecessary repetition, it is perhaps understandable that he should return to the original.

Although this is necessarily speculative, it is nevertheless striking that Petrarch's '...severissimos philosophorum stoicos...' echoes '...philosophi sumus ...,' where 'sumus' permits the liberal interpolation of 'severissimos ... stoicos' on the not implausible assumption – aided by the potentially misleading '*quidem nostro Platonem*' that Cicero can be represented as one of their number. 'stoicos' may also anticipate the following sentence in *Tusc.*, beginning '*Stoici vero...*'

Petrarch's '*in hoc errore versatos scimus*' seems to lend weight to the contention that this sentence is a reversion to Cicero's original, as it forms a not unlikely parallel to '*quem non iniuria Dicaearchus accusat*'. In this case, it is worth noting that Petrarch implicitly groups himself with Cicero and Dicaearchus, and thereby indirectly lends the weight of authority to his argument, especially if he anticipated that a reader of this portion of the *De remediis* would recognise the source and nature of his amendment.

Amaturum quidem sapientem volunt stoici; et sane, si de amore conveniat, non falluntur.	[IV, xxxiv, 72] Stoici vero et sapientem amaturum esse dicunt ...
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The clear parallelism of '*Amaturum quidem sapientem volunt stoici...*' and '*Stoici vero et sapientem amaturum esse dicunt...*' lends weight to the suggestion that Petrarch's '*Apud illos...*' follows Cicero's previous sentence, '*Philosophi sumus...*' It is striking that Petrarch once again inverts the three terms borrowed most directly from Cicero's original, giving '*Amaturum... quidem... stoici*' for '*Stoici...sapientem amaturum.*' In this case, however, the possibility of a corrupt redaction can be dismissed. Petrarch's inversion evidently represents a conscious alteration in the emphasis of the sentence. Whereas Cicero's emphasis naturally lies with '*Stoici*', the nature of the discussion between Ratio and Gaudium makes it natural for Petrarch's emphasis to fall upon '*Amaturum*'.

To speak of a shift in emphasis is, however, to anticipate slightly. Given the parallelism of these passages, it is of considerable importance to note the fact that Petrarch deliberately makes use only of the first portion of Cicero's original sentence. This adaptation allows Petrarch a number of rhetorical and argumentative opportunities. From a rhetorical perspective, his decision to use only that part of Cicero's original with which some agreement can be found allows him to extend something of an olive branch to that school of classical philosophy with which some rapprochement might be possible, and permits the appearance of balance and reason. From an argumentative perspective, the reconfiguration of Cicero's '*Stoici ...sapientem amaturum*' allows Petrarch to move the discussion from a rather generalised survey of licentious love in the poetry and philosophy of Greece and

Rome to a specific discussion of the nature of their error. The shift in emphasis from ‘*Stoici*’ in Cicero’s original to ‘*Amaturum*’ makes the identity of ‘*amor*’ of primary significance and places it at the heart of Petrarch’s analysis. This single amendment allows Petrarch to adapt Cicero’s somewhat difficult and rambling passage to his immediate purposes, and brings a precision to his argument which is lacking in the original.

Amabit enim sapiens Deum, ut dixi, amabit
et proximum, amabit virtutem, sapientiam,
patriam, parentes, filios, fratres, et amicos
et, si verus sapiens fuerit, inimicos etiam
amabit, non propter illos – fateor – sed
propter Eum qui hoc iubet.

This sentence represents the core of Petrarch’s argument. The concentration on the love of God necessitates the earlier shift of emphasis from ‘*Stoici*’ to ‘*Amaturum*’ and requires that the question of the meaning of ‘*amor*’ is made plain in the preceding passages. Although Petrarch’s loyalty to Cicero in surrounding passages is striking, there can be no question that this interpolation is intended deliberately to alter the semantic content of the terminology employed in the gloss.

Carraud (2:323) alludes to Scripture in his analysis of the previous sentence, although it seems more appropriate to note the connection here. ‘L’ironie évangélique viendra ensuite prendre le dessus ; cf Matth 5, 44 : *Diligite inimicos vestros*, etc.’

It is also worth observing that Petrarch’s remarks in this sentence directly contradict Cicero, *De amicitia*, V, 19: ‘*Namque hoc praestat amicitia propinquitati...*’

In his omnibus, oro te, quis locus est
pulchritudini? Sic enim in Ciceronis
Tusculano diffinitum legimus: “Amorem
ipsum conatum esse amicitie faciente ex
pulchritudinis specie.”

[IV, xxxiv, 72] ... *et amorem ipsum conatum
amicitiae faciendae ex pulchritudinis specie
definiunt.*

Petrarch here quotes the second half of ‘*Stoici vero et sapientem amaturum esse dicunt ...*’ Aside from the rhetorical and argumentative value which accrues to his manipulation of the first half of Cicero’s sentence, Petrarch’s use of ‘... *et amorem ipsum...*’ signals a return to the text in *Tusc.* IV, xxxiv, 72 and clearly marks the termination of an important interpolation. Additionally, its position following the clarification of *amor* entailed by ‘*Amabit enim Deus*’ permits Petrarch to embark on a concentrated form of the criticisms only implied by the earlier discussion of poetry.

Quis tam cecus, ut non videat quid sibi velit
hec pulchritudo? Recte ergo querit illic
Cicero: “Quis est enim,” inquit, “iste amor
amicitiae: cur non deformem adolescentem
quisquam amat neque formosam anum?”

[IV, xxxiii, 70] Quis est enim iste amor
amicitiae? Cur *neque* deformem
adolescentem quisquam amat neque
formosum *senem*?

From the perspective of Petrarch’s conception of friendship, this is an important passage, since it indicates the importance of the notion introduced in the previous sentence. In moving from *Tusc.* IV, xxxiv, 72 back to *Tusc.* IV, xxxiii, 70, Petrarch accords *amicitia* far more significance than in Cicero’s original and concentrates the focus of the discussion more precisely.

Nimirum etas et forma cum delinimentis
suis sunt huius “amicitiae” fundamenta, que
honestius sic dicitur quam “libido”; quid sit
tamen, apertis sanisque oculis facile
cernitur.

This fulfils two functions. (1) Having accorded the concept of *amicitia* greater significance than in Cicero’s original, Petrarch obliged himself to comment further. Cicero’s ‘*formosam senem*’ at *Tusc.* IV, xxxiii, 70, however, is followed immediately by a rather rambling discussion of Greek gymnasia and a commentary on this would detract from the focus of Petrarch’s discussion. This stark opposition of ‘*amicitia*’ and ‘*libido*’ neatly summarises the previous two quotations from Cicero. (2) The contrast between *amicitia* and *libido* represents the distillation of Ratio’s argument so far and sets the stage for more general conclusions to be drawn.

‘*Apertis sanisque oculis*’ is an interesting expression. Although Cicero, *De amicitia*, VIII, 27 does use an allusion to sight, it would seem unusual if this reference did not pick up Petrarch’s earlier use of II *Cor* 4:18, with its apparently Augustinian overtones. It is also worth noting the references to sight and ‘healthy eyes’ in Augustine’s *Soliloquies* and corollary references in the *Secretum*.

Itaque tota res eo redeat ut, si sit amor
quisquam in rerum natura sine solitudine
turpique desiderio sine suspirio et ardenti
cura, sit hic sane permissus sapienti; “vacat
enim omni libidine,” ut Cicero idem ait,
omnique tumultu atque angore animi, que
maxime sunt vitanda sapientibus.

[IV, xxxiv, 72] *Quis si quis est* in rerum
natura sine solitudine, sine desiderio,
sine cura, sine suspirio, sit sane; vacat enim
omni libidine...

This sentence is interesting for a variety of reasons. Of most immediate concern is the fact that Petrarch gives '*sit [hic] sane [permissus sapienti]*'. Whereas Cicero's original ('so be it!' in J. E. King's translation) makes '*Quis si ... sine suspiro*' ironical, Petrarch's amendment transforms the meaning utterly and has the effect of making the statement affirmative. If there is a form of love which exists '*sine solitudine...*' etc., then it has been surrendered to wisdom *sane* (reasonably, in accordance with reason). Although this is in itself not out of keeping with Stoic philosophy – and it is worth noting that Cicero's original irony is somewhat odd, even granting its undertone of pragmatism – it nevertheless contributes to a generally Christian tone in Petrarch's text, as Carraud briefly notes (vol. 2, p.323), which corresponds to the earlier interpolation '*Amabit enim Deus...*' and has a parallel in the *Secretum*. This can be seen further reflected in the insertion of the adjectives '*turpique*' and '*ardenti*'. Although these adjectives are perfectly valid additions to Cicero's original, they are terms which, when used with '*desiderio*' and '*cura*' are redolent of the early Augustinianism of the *Secretum*, where foul desires and ardent cares play a prominent role. A more striking illustration of the moral theology underpinning Petrarch's amendment can be found in '*omnique tumultu atque angore animi, que maxime sunt vitanda sapientibus*'. Again, neither '*tumultu atque angore animi*' nor '*vitanda sapientibus*' conflicts with Cicero's Stoicism, but given '*Amabit enim Deus...*' it is plain that the love without *libido* of which Petrarch is speaking is identifiable with the love of God. In this case, the linking of the 'tumult and anguish of the mind' with lust in opposition to the love of God, and '*vitanda sapientibus*' with the *amor Dei*, it seems more reasonable to observe a parallel in the argument of the first book of the *Secretum* and to posit an early Augustinian adaptation of Ciceronian Stoicism underpinning this passage. Indeed, Petrarch's decision to attribute only '*vacat enim omni libidine*' to Cicero seems to indicate an awareness that he was bending the meaning of *Tusc. IV, xxxiv, 72* beyond the limits of its author's original intentions.

It is important to note that following from the previous sentence, this reconfiguration of Cicero's original has the effect of making that *amicitia* which is based on a correct understanding of *amor* essentially an *amicitia Dei*.

From a purely textual perspective, it is curious that Petrarch should have inverted '*sine desiderio*' and '*sine cura*'. Given the close attention that has clearly been given to Cicero's original wording, it seems unjust to accuse him of reading inattentively. Although it is perhaps incidental, it is tempting once again to question whether Petrarch was using a corrupt redaction of the text.

Ceterum non ut fando rerum facies velari,
sic mutari veritas rerum potest; sermo
autem nobis nunc non nisi de libidinoso
amore susceptus est, qui his multisque aliis
magnis malis vacare nullo potest modo. Et
hec quidem de stoicis.

[IV, xxxiv, 72]... *haec* autem de libidine
oratio est.

This signals the end of Petrarch's gloss on Cicero's text, and '*Et hec quidem de stoicis*' acts
as a convenient, if abrupt, valedictory remark.

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